

COPELAND, RAEDENE P., Ph.D., “Bikini, Beads, and Feathers” at Trinidad Carnival: The Voice of the Younger Generation. (2010)
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Trinidad Carnival is a multifaceted festival that emerged out of slavery as a form of rebellion against the oppressive European colonialism of Trinidad (Hill, 1962).

Traditionally, masquerade costumes embodied socio-political characters meant to mock or critique the slave-holders. However, today the majority of costumes have shifted to a more global costume form consisting of “bikini, beads, and feathers” (Mason, 1998).

This modern day costume reflects a shift to a predominantly younger masquerade population. The “bikini, beads, and feathers” style is also representative of tensions in Trinidad society about the nature of the Carnival celebration today. The focus is now on the younger generation, who are heavily influenced by global styles and fashion, reflected in their preference for a “Las Vegas Showgirl” style masquerade costume (Scher, 2002). Carnival and its costumes are being produced as part of the global economy, with outside influences helping to shape how Trinidad celebrates its Carnival.

In this study, the “bikini, beads, and feathers” masquerade costume is positioned as central to the Carnival experience, and the focus is on understanding the voices of the younger generation, currently a gap in existing literature. To accomplish this goal, this study employs an ethnographic methodology to explore the lived experiences of a broad demographic of Carnival participants. A multi-method data collection approach, including depth interviews, participant observation, journals, and visual documentation, is used to ensure depth and scope of data. Thirty-four participants were chosen through a purposive sampling approach. Participants included males and females, aged 22 to 63,

and were engaged in a range of Carnival activities, from masquerade to costume production. Data were analyzed for commonalities and differences that surfaced across participants' experiences, which were then used to structure a thematic interpretation.

Four conceptual areas contextualize the issues impacting present day Carnival celebrations: *Embodying the Culture of Trinidad, Aesthetics and the Carnival Experience, The Economics of Experience, and Experiences in Social Context*. Each area serves to address the broader issues surfacing from participants' lived experiences. They also help to shed light on the impact of the younger generation on present day Carnival celebrations and in particular, masquerade costume. A second level of interpretation was then developed to theorize masquerade costume as key to understanding Carnival as lived experience.

This study posits that the "bikini, beads, and feathers" style masquerade costume is essentially the voice of the younger generation. This style reflects how Trinidad society has changed and the extent to which Carnival has become a global product. Therefore, this study sheds light on the critical importance of dress to understanding the cultural phenomenon that is Carnival. Areas of potential further research, including implications of the "bikini, beads, and feathers" for the "authenticity" and internationalization of the Trinidad Carnival experience are discussed.

“BIKINI, BEADS, AND FEATHERS” AT TRINIDAD CARNIVAL:
THE VOICE OF THE YOUNGER GENERATION

by

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@ 2010 by Raedene P. Copeland

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation first to my family, my parents Lennox and Janet Copeland, my siblings Heidi, Sadina, and Jesu, and nephew Jonathan. My family is my support, my strength, and my inspiration, their acceptance and unconditional love for me are invaluable to my success. I also dedicate this research to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, with the hope that this research on our beautiful country and culture will continue to be advanced in scholarship.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Carnival, a popular celebration in Trinidad for over two centuries, is now recognized as an international festival that attracts participants from all over the globe. Yet its history is one born of a history of oppression and marginalization. As Riggio (2004) explains, Spanish settlers transplanted Africans to Trinidad via the slave trade, thus,

The history of Trinidad Carnival is essentially the history of the peoples of Trinidad – embedded in the stories of conquest, enslavement, resistance, and indentureship, and in commercial, cultural, and ethnic exchange among the many who were, forcibly, brought to the place or settled there after Columbus first named the island Trinidad in 1498. (p. 39)

The wealthy settlers observed the practice of “carne-vale,” or the time just before the Lenten fast, with lavish festivities. It was an opportunity to celebrate and be festive in light of the upcoming fast from meat. However, these festivities excluded the African slaves, who were left to watch and listen to the celebrations, a position indicative of their powerless state in society.

Now known for its color, pageantry, and unique forms of artistic expression, Trinidad Carnival is perhaps best represented by the masquerade costume. Indeed, the

costume is the most visible mode of artistic expression at Trinidad Carnival, and is required for anyone to participate as a masquerader. But costumes have always been central to the festivities. Slaveholders and the wealthy would don lavish costumes for their balls. The slaves, though excluded from their masters' festivities, celebrated in their own way (Hill, 1962), with costumes made out of found materials, such as sticks, feathers, and stones, to reflect their African traditions. These costumes were socio-political in nature, representing both dominant persons in society (masters), as well as folklore characters. Costume provided a means of rebellion against the oppressive social structure. It was also a means for slaves to experience (pseudo) power, inclusion, and an opportunity to reverse the roles of their daily lives by mocking their oppressors (Riggio, 2004). Essentially, masquerade costume was used to communicate the lived experience of the oppressed, and this heritage can still be seen in some masquerade costumes today.

Traditionally, meanings communicated by masquerade ("mas") costume have been abstract. For example, if a theme was the ocean, then sailor costumes may be worn. For the spectator, the themes, while abstract, were unambiguous in translation. In recent years, masquerade costume has evolved to be less about historic meaning and more about aesthetics. Reflected in the term "pretty mas," the form of costume has evolved to become visually similar to a "showgirl" style costume. Because "pretty mas" costume consists primarily of bikini, beads, and feathers, it has become more difficult for viewers to interpret accurately the character being played by the masquerader. As will be discussed in depth, the advent of this new masquerade costume reflects today's female masquerader majority at Trinidad Carnival. The emergence of women as masqueraders

occurred after World War II, when they became integrated into the workforce and thus gained financial independence (Franco, 2007; Mason, 1998).

Some believe that mas costume has evolved to become less creative than it was in the past (Mason, 1998). As the “pretty mas” style of costume becomes more and more popular with the younger generations (aged 18-40), some worry that the cultural meanings central to Trinidad Carnival may be lost. Yet most existing research on Trinidad Carnival examines dress as just one small part of what is a dynamic, multi-faceted festival. Therefore, this study will explore masquerade costume as a central means of communication within Carnival. Specifically, this study will examine the modern “pretty mas” costume, and what it means for the celebration of Carnival in Trinidad today.

Background

For the past fifty years, much research has been done on various aspects of Trinidad Carnival, including its genesis, structure, and its growth as a transnational festival (cf. DeFreitas, 2007; Franco, 2007; Hill, 1972; Mason, 1998; Pearse, 1956). Today Trinidad Carnival is an internationally renowned festival, and Trinidadians living in other countries have even established their own Carnivals in cities such as London, New York, and throughout Canada. As Carnival has evolved to become a global event, changes in its form and function have caused debate and dissention amongst those who prefer traditional Carnival forms (Green, 2007, 2002; Scher 2003, 2002). As masqueraders have become more diverse, changes in the costume have become inevitable. Global influences and the changing tastes of present day masqueraders reflect

a shift away from traditional Carnival. Trinidadians are regularly exposed to commercialism and must deal with modern conceptions of beauty. Likewise, masquerade costume has increasingly come to reflect the new, more global context of Trinidad Carnival (Mason, 1998). Consequently what is and is not authentic has become a major topic of debate among Trinidadians (Green, 2007).

Carnival: Then and Now

Trinidad Carnival began as a celebration of two sorts: one of the European slave masters, and the other of the slaves (Hill, 1972). The Europeans, of Roman Catholic faith, celebrated the upcoming fast from meat, the Lenten period, with a lavish ball they called “carne-vale” (to go without meat) (Green & Scher, 2007). The elite donned expensive costumes that included masks and feathers, while the slaves used whatever they could find to create their costumes. While the elite masked to create a fun and mysterious environment for their lavish affair, the slaves masked to mimic their oppressors. Both represented a form of escape, but for different reasons.

Traditional costume forms were used to communicate the social, political, and economic grievances of a disenfranchised class. However, present day costumes have changed into forms that are nearly indistinguishable from one another. Theorists explain that present day masqueraders are participating not for rebellion, but for release from their daily roles that it provides (Franco, 2007; Mason, 1998). Mikhail Bakhtin, the father of theoretical work on Carnival, explores the dualities, heteroglossia, and meanings evident in such cultural festivals. Bakhtin’s ideas apply to traditional Trinidad Carnival, as it embodies many of the elements he identified as characteristic of Carnivals: gay

relativity, instability, openness and infiniteness, the metamorphic, ambivalence, the eccentric, materiality and corporeality, excess, the exchange of value positions (up/down, master/slave), and the sensation of the universality of being (Bakhtin, 1965). Lee (1991) agrees, in that one common way to understand Carnivals is to see them as the “collective expression of the perceptions, meanings, aspirations, and struggles engendered by the material conditions of social life and informed by the cultural traditions of the group” (p. 417). Regardless of the time period and the meanings behind masquerader participation, Carnival provides a level of solidarity and cohesiveness that is not experienced throughout the rest of year. As Hill (1972) succinctly describes, it is for this reason a “leveler of social distinctions” (p. 10).

Carnival today is a combination of tradition and a more modern approach to celebrating. That is, the events held throughout the Carnival season are either a way to display local talents or to simply provide an opportunity for Carnival participants to ‘fete’ (party) together, build camaraderie, and get into the Carnival spirit. The main attraction of Carnival in Trinidad is the “pretty mas” parade on Carnival Monday and Tuesday. At this parade, the masqueraders “play mas.” “Mas,” short for “masquerade,” together with “play,” describes the act of parading the streets with fellow masqueraders of the same band. An important reason for playing mas is to experience the union of people from diverse walks of life. For example, Figure 1 shows three Caucasian foreigners “playing mas” with their friends of African descent. This type of diversity is common at Trinidad Carnival. Thus, Carnival is a festive space that transcends boundaries and celebrates aspects of human community (Riggio, 2003).



Figure 1: Masqueraders from different socio-cultural backgrounds.

Components of Carnival

According to Riggio (2004), Trinidad Carnival includes three primary components: calypso (and soca), pan, and masquerading (p. 93). The main activities are held in the country's capital of Port-of-Spain, with the core of the Carnival celebrations happening over a five day period, starting on Carnival Friday and ending on Carnival Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday. The events are designed to showcase the country's cultural art forms.

Calypso is the traditional music of Trinidad Carnival. It is characterized by a slow, melodic, verbal rendition of the historic and present-day socio-economic and political strife present in the country. As Rohlehr (2004) explains, “The calypso is a living example of Afro-Caribbean oral tradition adapting itself to a process of continuous change” (p. 213). As Carnival became more unisex, the music diversified to include soca, a faster paced beat than calypso, with lyrics focused on topics like the dynamics of male/female relationships or behavior at Carnival. For example, a song might talk about the way a woman danced on a man at Carnival, or teach the audience a dance move that involves jumping and waving a flag.

Calypso and soca are the musical foundations of Trinidad culture, and thus competitions are held every year to crown the best calypsonian and soca artist. Artists are judged based on song lyrics and stage performance. In Figure 2, the calypsonian is performing his calypso through song and dress. Calypsonians have traditionally sought to represent the theme of their song through dress. His song explained that the crime-fighting duo Batman and Robin are needed to solve current problems with crime in Trinidad, thus his costume represents both characters, as it is half Batman and half Robin.

The Soca Monarch competition is held on Carnival Saturday, while the crowning of the Calypso Monarch, called Dimanche Gras, is held on Carnival Sunday Night. Mason (1998) states, “To become Calypso Monarch is the dream of almost every calypsonian; it is their pinnacle of achievement, a supreme mark of all-round ability which can set them up for many years in the future” (p. 36). Alongside the major

competition, there are also many small-scale competitions that are held at various places, including corporations and schools, throughout the country.



Figure 2: Calypsonian performing in a popular calypso tent.

The second component of Carnival is pan. The steel pan/drum is the national instrument of Trinidad and Tobago and has achieved a global presence in recent decades (Mason, 1998). During every Carnival, a pan competition, called *Panorama*, is held on Carnival Saturday. Panorama provides the opportunity for various pan orchestras to vie for the best musical arrangement of a calypso or soca song, and best execution of that song. As Riggio (2004) asserts, “Panorama, first established to celebrate Independence in 1962, began the process of marketing steel drums as the national instrument of the newly independent Trinidad and Tobago” (p. 43). Pan orchestras practice religiously for months before the Carnival season, and the group may include as many as three hundred “pan men.” Panorama is a popular event during Trinidad Carnival, as participants dance, wave flags, and cheer on their orchestra of choice (Mason, 1998). It is also another opportunity for people to unite, meet other Carnival participants, and release the stresses of daily life.

The third component, playing mas, means participating in the masquerade aspect of Carnival, one of its oldest traditions. Carnival participants can participate in both “pretty” and “dirty” mas events, and they oftentimes do, so as to experience the breadth of the Carnival experience. Indeed, Mason (1998) asserts that Carnival allows people to get lost in the spirit of the celebrations, therefore it is common to see prominent, upstanding professionals costumed and intoxicated while dancing in the streets.

Each mas band (an organization that provides masqueraders with costumes) develops a theme and creates a section related to this theme (see Figure 3). For example, the band in Figure 3 chose the theme Temptations. Thus, each section of the band will

represent some form of temptation, for example this particular section is “Fetish.” The band selects the costumes that its masqueraders will wear based on its theme. The more cohesive the mas band, the more fun the masquerade experience during Carnival. Mas band organizations invest money and time into ensuring that their masqueraders’ physiological needs are met via trucks carrying food and even bathrooms that move along with the band.



Figure 3: Mas band section.

When playing mas, masqueraders must parade the streets with their band, and in the section they have been assigned. However, they are sometimes allowed to hang out with friends from other sections of the band until it is time to cross the judging points. When approaching the judging stations, the security guards order the masqueraders to get with their assigned section. It is then the masquerader's responsibility to perform as instructed. Before the judges, the masqueraders will jump, run, and dance together to demonstrate cohesion and display their costumes. Through stylized dance, the costume and additional props are meant to enhance the dance moves and create added visual effect.

Masquerade costume making is an important art form in Trinidad, thus costume designers are held to a competitive standard to ensure the continuation of the tradition. Every year there is a King and Queen of the Band competition held on Carnival Sunday. Mason (1998) states, "Kings and queens are the symbolic leaders of the bands, and an outlet for outrageous activity" (p. 84). Their costumes are the most elaborate and epitomize the central theme of the band for that year. Being the King and Queen of the band is a highly recognized title, and one that is worthy of respect in Trinidad culture even after Carnival is over.

In contrast to pretty mas, dirty mas, or 'ole'(old) mas (also called J'ouvert), begins in the early hours of Carnival Monday morning and ends in time to prepare for the formal parade of mas bands later that day. J'ouvert is less structured and more about freedom of expression through whatever means of costume one desires. As Mason (1998) describes,

‘J’ouvert’ (from the French ‘day opens’) is a chaotic, anarchic ‘dirty mas’ of rough, home-made costumes and drunkenness which begins spontaneously in the early minutes of Carnival Monday, hours before the sequined masqueraders claim the streets as their own. J’ouvert is about abandon, physicality and fear, a deliberately hellish counterpoint to pretty mas’ heavenly themes. (p. 9)

The informal masquerade environment provides the perfect opportunity for impromptu performances by those participants who do not want to take the formal stage. It is also a less expensive form of masquerading. At this celebration one can see the revival of traditional masquerade and many men cross-dressing to play female traditional roles (Riggio, 2004). To cross-dress, men will borrow dresses, wigs, and use pillows to create huge bosoms and buttocks. Others may costume as “jab-jab” devils, wearing only underwear, oil, red paint and two horns.

It is important to note that the five days of Trinidad Carnival are preceded by months of planning and preparation. Band themes for the next year are selected by the end of the current Carnival season. A year-long schedule of events in preparation for the next upcoming Carnival season is typically highlighted by a costume launch in July. Each band organizes a fete named after their Carnival theme and puts on a brief fashion show displaying its costumes for the upcoming Carnival. This party is the first opportunity for potential masqueraders to see the costume options while listening to soca.

After the launch party, costumes are then made available for purchase online. The high demand costumes of popular bands are usually sold out within a matter of hours. While costumes can be purchased through a band’s website, the actual costume must be picked up the week before Carnival. Masqueraders themselves use the months before Carnival to prepare for the upcoming season. They will generally consult with

friends to decide which band they want to play mas with and which costume style they like best. Once this decision is made, they begin focusing on “getting in shape” for the intense party season ahead. Getting in shape may involve exercising and going to ‘fetes’ to learn the latest popular dance moves and to stay abreast of the latest soca music. This ‘feting’ goes on from August until the ultimate masquerade fete of Carnival in February. Masqueraders also use the months before Carnival to find accessories that complement their costume and will help them to stand out in the crowd.

Trinidad Carnival in the Global Context

Recent literature on Trinidad Carnival focuses primarily on the issues of authenticity, commodification, and appropriation. Carnival is marketed globally today, but Nurse (1991) notes that it has been becoming increasingly commercialized since the turn of the nineteenth century. Smaller-scale cultures, like that of Trinidad, are increasingly being impacted by global events and innovations. Giddens (1990) defines globalization as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (p. 64). According to Giddens (1990), the impact of globalization started in the Middle Ages with the crusades of the early Christians, trading ventures among the traditional cultures, and global expeditions of the Europeans. As a result, Thrift (1988) argues that many global festivals, daily traditions and activities are centered around “the four great pivots of Christmas, Easter, Lammas and Michaelmas” (p. 56), and hence the popularity of the pre-Lenten Carnivals. Today, globalization and the advancements in technology it brings have resulted in what some theorists have termed

the “global present” (Hall, 1991) wherein the global sending and receiving of information is nearly simultaneous (Giddens, 1990).

This global present, and especially the ease of access to foreign markets, have made it possible for some to capitalize on Carnival. Industrialization allows for the production of a wider variety of materials, and for providing customization to the consumer (Mason, 1998). Technological advancements also mean increased output and profits at a decreased cost (Mason, 1998). As a result, masquerade parades today are dominated by large commercial bands (approximately 3,000 masqueraders or more). Many foreign ideas and materials have diffused from similar events in other countries to be incorporated into Trinidad’s Carnival including the present day “bikini, beads, and feathers” that make for its pretty mas costume.

To some, pretty mas represents the death of Carnival. Those who prefer traditional masquerade style cringe over the “bikini-isation” of their Carnival that they believe to be “tainted with western hedonism” (Mason, 1998, p. 128). Carnival today is indeed different from what it was in the pre-emancipation, pre-industrialized, pre-independent, and pre-globalized Trinidadian society. The importance of costume during Carnival is obvious, yet its meanings within the modern global context of Trinidad Carnival have yet to be decoded.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research is to understand the form and meanings of masquerade costume at Trinidad Carnival. This research fills two gaps in existing research. First, it examines masquerade costume as central to the essence of the Carnival

experience. Second, it explores the experiences of a range of Carnival participants, and particularly the younger generations (18-40). Thus far, both foci are lacking in research on Trinidad Carnival. Research occurred in Trinidad over a period of two months in order to address these gaps in the literature.

Four objectives have been defined to achieve the purpose of the study: (a) to examine the form of masquerade costume worn at Trinidad Carnival; (b) to investigate the meanings that are associated with this costume; (c) to explore the cultural and social significance of these meanings; (d) to explore what these meanings communicate about the experience of Trinidad Carnival. A phenomenological approach to understanding Carnival as a lived experience facilitates an interpretation of costume as integral to this experience.

Conceptual Framework

Methodological Considerations

The primary goal of this research is to gain an in depth understanding of the meanings communicated by masquerade costume and what these meanings say about the Carnival experience. To achieve this goal, an ethnographic research methodology was employed. According to Belk, Sherry, and Wallendorf (1988), the use of ethnography is “intended to provide a rich portrait of the phenomenon so that the reader not only learns inputs and outcomes but also gains an understanding of the texture, activities, and processes occurring” (p. 450).

The multi-faceted scope of this research required that as the researcher, I be present in the field during Carnival and actively participate in the build-up to the season.

Therefore, a total of two months was spent in Trinidad, where data was collected via the use of four qualitative methods: participant observation, in-depth interviews, journals, and visual documentation. Once data collection was complete, a thematic analysis of the data was developed. The goal was to produce a rich, insightful, and credible interpretation of the meanings inherent to masquerade dress at Trinidad Carnival.

Theoretical Considerations

Investigations of dress require consideration of historic context, as what is deemed fashionable changes over time. Further, as Damhorst, Miller-Spillman, and Michelman (2005) point out, "Trends in technology, the economy, religion, the arts, notions of morality, social organization, and patterns of everyday living are reflected in dress" (p. 3). "Dress" includes both body modifications and supplements, or everything done or applied to the body to alter one's appearance and satisfy socio-cultural expectations (Eicher, Evenson, & Lutz, 2000; Kaiser, 1997; Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992). But dress also communicates meaning. Researchers study dress because of its importance in identifying psychological and social components of experience through visual cues (Damhorst, Miller-Spillman, & Michelman, 2005). Meanings communicated through dress can be considered "material culture" and represent the socio-cultural mores, practices, and customs of a society (Eicher, Evenson, & Lutz, 2000). Ultimately, dress does not take place in a vacuum; it is part of our everyday lived experience, and as this study illustrates, it takes on particular importance during special events and for cultural customs like Carnival.

Fashion is a primary influence on the evolution of dress. Banner (1983) summarizes the belief that “alteration in fashion will take place, but change will take place in a changed world, and therefore, will hold meaning that it did not have in the past” (p. 291). Theorists from various schools of thought have studied fashion change to explore its relation to issues such as modesty/immodesty, social class emulation, and the manifestation of social change (cf. Blumer, 1939; Laver, 1937; McClung Lee, Blumer, Holinghead, Hughes & Reuter, 1969; Simmel, 1904, Veblen, 1899). Further, Flugel (1930) and Laver (1937) theorize that fashion change occurs as areas of the female form are revealed and concealed, that is, “shifting erogenous zones.” Such theoretical considerations were relied on in this study to examine the significance of masquerade costume for understanding Carnival.

Scope and Significance

Trinidad Carnival represents a critically important facet of the country’s culture and is one of its most important and visible customs. Solomon (2007) defines a custom as “a norm handed down from the past that controls basic behaviors” (p. 544). Considering that Trinidad’s Carnival was born during European colonization and through the transplantation of African slaves, it is important to examine the role of Carnival within the culture of Trinidad. Solomon (2007) defines culture as “the accumulation of shared meanings, rituals, norms and traditions among the members of an organization or society” (p. 542), and that culture is constantly evolving while it harmonizes traditional ideas and values with new ones.

During Spring 2009, preliminary research with Carnival participants revealed salient issues that were then used to develop the scope of the present study. Primary among these issues is the perception of masquerade costume. Masquerade costume, while it may not appear unusual to the average spectator, has spurred much debate and discussion within Trinidad. Political, economic, and social conditions of Trinidad have always shaped the voice of Carnival participants. In turn, the voices of the participants shape the style and form of masquerade costume. Traditional masquerade costumes were intricately designed and constructed to display the artistic prowess of the costume designer (Hill, 1962). Designers worked hard at creating distinguishable products. Inspiration came from various political and cultural figures important to Trinidadians (Franco, 2007). Hours of rehearsal of oratories and stylized dance movements were necessary to embody the character as masqueraders sought to transform themselves into their characters through the costume.

Masquerade is still the major driving force at Carnival today, but the costume has evolved from its traditional form and function. Today's masqueraders favor new costume styles comprised primarily of "showgirl" style elements, popularly referred to as "bikini, beads, and feathers." Performances at Carnival today are highly sexualized with the body displayed prominently through the masquerade costumes (Mason, 1998). Few bands today choose themes and create costumes with the hope that their masqueraders will perform an oratory or thematic dance. Instead the focus is on looking good and having fun. For masqueraders, costume has become the price of admission, access to a mas band, to 'lime' (hang out) with their friends, as one wines (Trinidad style dancing)

and jams. Scher (2003) points to the problems some believe this has caused: “The wine and jam Carnival, represented by young middle class women, is seen as not only unpatriotic, culturally destructive and morally suspect; it is potentially hurting the economy” (p. 473).

Yet the young middle class invests considerable amounts of money to play mas with a band they like. Costumes can cost up to \$1000, on average. This increased spending power is a result of the Trinidad oil boom that restructured the country’s socio-economics (Nurse, 1991). While most see this increased wealth as a good thing, those who are more traditional in their views on Carnival fear that the “soul-less” forces of international capitalism will steal away its authenticity (Green, 2007, p. 214). For this group, industrialization and globalization are the primary threats to maintaining the cultural integrity of Trinidad Carnival.

Currently, hybrid forms of Trinidad Carnival can be found throughout the Caribbean, as well as every major city in North America and Britain (Nurse, 1999). As Cohen (2007) points out,

While Caribbean countries may put on festivals for different occasions and may even try to distinguish their celebrations by referring to them as *Festival* rather than *Carnival*, it is from Trinidad’s Carnival that they take their inspiration, form, and structure. (p. 898)

The global spread of Carnival can be credited to industrialization and the increased opportunities for economic and technological development that come with it. Further, the demand for cheap immigrant labor and improved transportation methods has brought forth the emergence of the transnational Trinidadian (Green & Scher, 2007; Nurse, 1999;

Scher, 2003). Carnival is increasingly becoming more global as entrepreneurs are capitalizing on the earning potential of this festival. Costume designers and mas band marketers travel the world to observe the changing tastes of their target markets and then create products that will appeal them. Industrialization has brought about mass production and global sourcing to decrease the cost of costume production. Simplifying the costume form and sourcing it via inexpensive labor are business strategies that decrease production costs and increase profits. But what do these changes mean for the cultural significance of Carnival? Has Carnival become less about Trinidad culture and society as its global popularity has increased? This research will shed light on the implications of globalization and industrialization for understanding the experience of Trinidad Carnival, and particularly for what makes this experience “authentic.”

Summary

This chapter introduced the topic and provided justification for the study. A description of Trinidad Carnival was provided and the role of dress relative to Carnival was discussed. The theoretical and methodological considerations framing the study were outlined. Issues that define the scope of the topic as well as its significance were discussed. The next chapter includes a review of the literature pertinent to the study.

CHAPTER II

THE LITERATURE THAT INFORMS THE RESEARCH

This chapter explores existing research pertinent to the topic of Carnival and the role of masquerade costume within it. This chapter will begin by addressing the general concept of Carnival as a universal phenomenon. Second, performance will be explored as an integral part of Carnival. Third, dress as a major component of participation and performance at Carnival will be discussed. Fourth, the role of consumption during festive events such as Carnival will be examined. Last, the impact of the global context on Carnival's form and structure will be explored. In reviewing the pertinent literature, gaps and areas in need of research will be highlighted for their importance to furthering the study of the Carnival phenomenon.

Understanding Carnival

Mikhail Bakhtin is considered the expert on Carnival; his theories have been widely adopted and referenced in the literature. Bakhtin's seminal perspectives on Carnival are based on his upbringing during the Stalinist era. He framed Carnival as a brief period of laughter and mockery against the existing social hierarchy and organized institutions through folk culture. Carnivals, as he explains, represent the opportunity for citizens to rebel against the natural social order, and to negate the power of official institutions (Bakhtin, 1984). However, some theorists contend that Bakhtin's interpretation of Carnival may not be pertinent to such celebrations today. Schechner

(2004) points out that Bakhtin's analyses of Carnival are based on the totalitarian world of Stalinism, which is quite unlike the democratic society characteristic of countries, like Trinidad, that host present day Carnivals. Others question the validity of Bakhtin's theories because of the organized nature of Carnival events. One such theorist is Eagleton (1981), who believes that Carnivals are often organized by a country's government and "so vivaciously celebrated that the necessary political criticism is almost too obvious to make" (p. 148). Eagleton's point is that the powerful still determine the structure and order of Carnival events. Despite these criticisms, Bakhtin's (1984) description of the purposes of Carnival as a source of play and release are reflected in present day Trinidad Carnival.

Trinidad Carnival's roots are deeply embedded in the social, political, and economic history of the country. As Green and Scher (2007) state,

The current context of Carnival emerges out of the development of Trinidadian society from early colonization by Spain, the creation of a slave society and economy based on sugar production, the aftermath of emancipation, successive waves of immigration and emigration, the changing economic fortunes of Caribbean states, struggles for independence, and post-independence nation building. (p. 2)

Like other Carnivals, its origins are based on traditional European festivities that were held before the fast of the Lenten period, festivities that were sanctioned by the Roman Catholic Church. As Mason (1998) explains, "The Catholic Church's adoption of Carnival was, then, merely a pragmatic decision, but the festival soon came to be associated with the Church itself, which managed to preserve the festival when it was dying elsewhere" (p. 13). The pre-Lenten occurrence of the festival led to the name

“Carnival,” or carne-vale, which means “removal of meat.” Practiced all over Europe, from Spain to Italy, Carnival was even brought to the New World via the colonists and emerged as Mardi Gras in New Orleans, Carnival in Brazil, and Carnival in Trinidad. Although similar in many ways to the European celebrations, Trinidad Carnival made distinctions as to who could participate. As Mason (1998) asserts,

Theirs’ [European slave masters] was a sometimes raucous affair, but was staged against a more genteel backdrop of balls and dances with masquerade as the centerpiece. There were street fairs, practical jokes, house to house visiting, promenading in town, firework displays and string instrument music: activities mostly confined to white settlers and Trinidad’s substantial number of ‘free coloureds,’ with slaves expressly forbidden to take part. (p. 13)

Ultimately, the exclusion and powerless state of the slaves led to the development of the form of Carnival that is practiced in Trinidad today.

To understand the development of Trinidad Carnival in its entirety, it is important to examine key developments along Trinidad’s historical timeline. Batson and Riggio (2004) point to a shift in power, an influx of immigrants to Trinidad, and social unrest as influences on the way Carnival is celebrated today. Initial influences came from the shift in power from the French to the British in 1797, leading to the first wave of immigration of Chinese as indentured workers in 1806. Both factors influenced language and culture in Trinidad, but perhaps the most critical development was the abolition of the slave trade on August 1, 1838. At this time, the first signs of social unrest occurred, the “cannes brulees” (burning of cane) celebrations, now called “Canboulay.” Done with the rhythmic accompaniment of drums, the tradition of Canboulay continues during present day Carnival.

From the 1840s to the 1860s, the Canboulay celebrations were assigned to Carnival Sunday night, and Carnival was limited to two days. During this time more immigrants came to Trinidad, including East Indians, Europeans, Americans, and some from neighboring islands. In 1857, the first oil well was drilled, thereby creating wealth for Trinidad, contributing to the development of an influential middle class, and ultimately helping to industrialize the nation. From the 1880s to 1930s, the “tamboo-bamboo” bands, comprised of instruments made initially of cement pans and paint cans, transformed into the steel drums known today. The French influence began to wane by the 1920s and eventually English replaced French Creole as the popular language espoused by calypsonians.

Carnival was suspended during World War II (1941-1945) and resumed in 1946. Carnival committees formalized the various talents to create a competitive element and the Carnival Queen and King and Calypso King Competitions were introduced. 1970 saw the first corporate sponsorship of a steel band orchestra, and the Black Power demonstrations impacted the flow of Carnival events. In 1991, the National Carnival Commission became the permanent name for the organization regulating Carnival. Soca music was formalized in 1993 with the first Soca Monarch competition.

Such highlights in the historical development of Carnival illustrate the range of influences on the development of it as a multi-faceted phenomenon. But it was after the emancipation of the slaves, when Trinidad, a cosmopolitan and socially stratified country, slowly unified the celebration. As Schechner (2004) explains,

Trinidad Carnival lies within the shadows of slavery, indentured labor, colonialism, imperialism, and now, globalization. Carnival is not sunshine dispelling these shadows but a means of overcoming them, assimilating them, and playing them out. Carnival is a celebration of freedom – yes, but not only or even mostly, individual freedom, but social, collective, national freedom – a liberty that is tenuous, hard-won, and still felt as threatened. (p. 6)

This history is expressed in today's Carnival through the various events held between Carnival Friday and Ash Wednesday.

After the Carnival parties or fetes on Friday night, the main events of Carnival begin with the “Kiddie’s Carnival” on Saturday morning, which is a masquerade parade and competition for children. On Saturday night, the main event is Panorama, the steel pan competition, held at the Queen’s Park Savannah. Sunday is a slow day, but at night the popular Dimanche Gras occurs, the national calypso competition where artists sing the music of the island. The Kings and Queens of the Mas Band competition are also judged during Dimanche Gras. These two competitions build momentum for the J’ouvert celebrations held during the pre-dawn hours of the following (Monday) morning. Participants mask themselves in old costumes, mud, oil, and even chocolate, to transform themselves into their characters. Some masqueraders parade with J’ouvert bands, while others simply parade the streets with friends. After J’ouvert, the atmosphere is primed for the pretty mas events. The main pretty mas events are the masquerade parades held on Carnival Monday and Tuesday. The next day, Ash Wednesday, signals the end of Carnival and the beginning of Lent.

Trinidad Carnival celebrations include multiple events that encourage competition as a way to maintain traditional artistic forms. Schechner (2004) notes, “Unlike the

popular democracy of Bakhtin's model, Trinidad Carnival is fiercely competitive and hierarchical" (p. 7). The increasing number of competitions can be attributed to the increased involvement of government, and the fact that Carnival's popularity is spreading globally to become a considerable source of revenue for the country. Typically, Trinidad's competitions have largely had to do with costumed performances, wherein the costume is a symbolic link between the masquerader and the spectator.

Performance at Carnival

McCracken (1998) explains that costumes, like clothing, are powerful social communicators. During Carnival, emphasis is not only placed on the costume, but also on the performance in the costume. That is, the personification of a character. Turner (1986) explains that a performance is transformative, as to perform is "to bring something about, to consummate something, or to 'carryout' a play, order, or project" (p. 79). Carnival participants' performances can be both staged and impromptu. Carlson (1996) describes performance by stating,

Performance is a specific event with its liminoid nature fore-grounded almost invariably and clearly separated from the rest of life, presented by performers and attended by audiences both of whom regard the experiences as made up of material to be interpreted, to be reflected upon, and to be engaged in – emotionally, mentally, and perhaps even physically. This particular sense of occasion and focus as well as the overarching social envelope combine with the physicality of theatrical performance to make it one of the most powerful and efficacious procedures that human society has developed for the endlessly fascinating process of cultural and personal self-reflection and experimentation. (p. 27)

A history of political and socio-economic strife has been the glue that holds Carnival together, and was typically a source of motivation for its performers. As discussed earlier, the opportunities for performance include masquerading, playing pan, and singing calypso (Riggio, 2004). Each type of performance is designed to display local talent while educating the audience about the history of Carnival. In the past playing mas was an event particularly focused on performance, in that the masquerader's main goal was to communicate the character well enough to be reviewed accurately by his or her audience. The masquerader invested time in personifying the character with the goal of being received as the character (i.e., transformed self). Goffman (1959) asserts that when an individual appears as a transformed self he/she is asking his observers to take seriously the portrayal of his/her new character. Ultimately, the performer's focus was on getting the right reaction from the crowd. Thus, similar to communication through dance (Horst, 1969), performers at Carnival understood the importance of fully executing their character to eliminate ambiguities and rely on their costumes to solicit an accurate acknowledgment of their transformed self. Traditional mas characters include the Fancy Sailor, the Midnight Robber, and Dame Lorraine. Each referenced a character unique to Trinidad history, and required a specific costume and scripted behavior. In Figure 4, this modern-day traditional style band is depicting aspects of Africa. Thus, the cut and sew costumes are used to clearly embody the masqueraders' characters as African people (see Figure 4).



Figure 4: Traditional mas costumes.

During Carnival there are also those individuals who perform outside of an organized masquerade group. They are the masqueraders who parade the streets, performers in their own right, pleasing the crowd with their ability to improvise dance moves with strangers in a synchronized manner. Leach (1966) explains that these impromptu performances are oftentimes individuals playing themselves. As he explains, these participants, “play-act being precisely the opposite of what they really are; men act as women, women as men, being as beggars, servants as masters, acolytes as bishops” (p.

134). These impromptu performances depict individuals who are captivated and moved by the present moment and the near environment.

As Mehrabian and Russell (1974) explain, environmental cues can evoke emotions of the inhabitants of public spaces. For Carnival participants, the music and solidarity shared by participants in the festive environment requires that they join in, and as soon as the music (calypso or soca) plays, the movement of their bodies is automatic. An onlooker may not understand how such a group of strangers can come together to dance in a manner that appears to be coordinated, but it is important to understand that these cultural performances have meanings rooted in the cultural history of this country's Carnival. As Riggio (2004) explains, Trinidad Carnival is "embedded in the stories of conquest, enslavement, resistance, and indentureship, and in commercial, cultural, and ethnic exchange among the many who were forcibly brought to the place" (p. 39). Thus, years of bondage fostered solidarity and sharing of cultural practices as the enslaved united in their rebellion to create Carnival.

Today, "playing mas" is the term used to explain the act of costuming and parading in the street with other masqueraders (Schechner, 2004). As discussed previously, an individual can participate in Carnival as a masquerader either with a formal band a (mas band or organization that decides on a theme and then creates and provides costumes) in the pretty mas celebrations of Carnival Monday or Tuesday, or independently during the dirty ole mas J'ouvert celebrations. To be a member of a mas band, the individual must purchase a costume. However, to play mas in the J'ouvert celebrations, it is not necessary to purchase a band's costume, so there is more freedom to

choose one's own costume. Playing with a mas band means that the masquerader has to follow the guidelines of the band. These guidelines include wearing the band's costume and adhering to organizational and positioning rules for the parade. The J'ouvert celebrations are more relaxed, as masqueraders paint themselves in mud, oil, chocolate and dress in homemade costumes that portray folklore or societal characters (Mason, 1998). It is in the creation of their individual characters that the need for performance is born.

To don oneself in a costume is to commit to performing, a vital function of playing mas. Even for "pretty mas" playing mas requires that masqueraders in a particular band dance and parade together as a group. Because the dancing and parading go on all day, the band fills trucks with provisions, including food, drinks, and even bathrooms, for the masqueraders. These trucks prevent the masqueraders from having to break from the group to get something to drink or to rest. The sole focus is on the individual's performance as part of the larger group, with the costume being a primary element of this performance.

Dress at Carnival

Carnival dress has been a topic of interest to scholars because of the visibility of the dressed body during the celebrations. Damhorst, Miller-Spillman, and Michelman (2005) posit that dress deserves academic exploration because it chronicles historical eras, social traditions, and reflects the socio-economic changes and mores of a particular society. Dress at Carnivals is no different, yet it is often referred to as "costume." Theorists explain that while costume is dress, use of the term "costume" is generally

reserved for festive events, theater, ceremonies, and rituals, as costume indicates an out-of-everyday experience (Eicher, Evenson, & Lutz, 2000; Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1995). Members of a society costume for multiple reasons, including solidarity, escape from daily roles, and rebellion (Franco, 2004; Green & Scher, 2007; Mason, 1998; Schechner, 2004). As Mason (1998) describes, this is also true for understanding costume at Trinidad Carnival.

Mas, both pretty and dirty, engenders more of a feeling of togetherness than any other part of Carnival and allows its participants to become something they are not, to experience intimacy under a costumed cloak of anonymity, to behave as they like without any care for their everyday status in society. (p. 109)

Carnival costume evolved out of elitism, oppression, rebellion and liberation (Riggio, 2004). Masqueraders were predominantly male, as Trinidad society was patriarchal, and women, important for upholding the values of society, were marginalized (Mason, 1998). Costume was the mode of communication that males, before and after emancipation, used to express their social grievances (Liverpool, 1993). Specifically, when the slaves' fight for freedom became a national movement, costumes conveyed very aggressive meanings via personalities like the Midnight Robber, a Pierrot (i.e. French character that performs poetic rhetoric about societal issues), and stick fighters. Men dominated masquerade such that if there was a female role to be played, males would actually cross-dress to perform the role, as in Dame Lorraine (Franco, 2007; Hill, 1972; Mason, 1998).

Although women were marginalized as masqueraders, they still played an integral role during Carnival. Women who were brave enough to participate did so in the dirty

mas celebrations (Franco, 2007). Covering themselves with mud and oil and parading in the darkness of the pre-dawn hours provided them with anonymity. Although the literature talks about the exclusion of women in regards to playing costumed masqueraders, it should be noted that their presence was important to the success of the men's performances. That is, the males needed an audience to legitimize their costumed identities.

Symbolic interactionists posit that meanings are established by one's dress through one's interaction with others (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1962; Stone, 1962). Applying Stone's (1962) Program and Review Theory, the male masquerader needs to convince his spectators (reviewers) of his character through his costumed appearance (program). As Stone (1962) posits, "In appearances...selves are established and mobilized...as the self is dressed, it is simultaneously addressed" (p. 87). Thus, it was the job of the pre-emancipated Trinidadian woman to review and address the male masquerader as his transformed self, thereby helping him to achieve a successful costumed identity.

Women's independence came after World War II when the men went off to war. As women gained independence there was a notable shift in their role within Carnival (Mason, 1998). As both slaves and females, they faced oppression twice-fold in comparison to their male counterparts, so they were ready for independence and the opportunity to express themselves. This independence fueled a new attitude on the part of the Trinidadian woman, as she no longer had to depend on a man for financial support (Enloe, 1990). Whereas in the past it was only strong willed women and prostitutes who

played J'ouvert, once women began to be financially independent they had the means to play mas in whatever costumes they liked.

Green and Scher (2007) state, "One significant factor in the decline in historical masquerades may be the intense nationalist fervor that came with independence" (p. 12). Although this may be true, it may also be true that with the emergence of the independent woman, the male dominated, traditional masquerade characters had to decline, as a new target market emerged. Consequently, costume designers who had focused very little on creating costumes for female masqueraders, found themselves bombarded by the burgeoning demands of women, to the extent that the women aggressively sought to create costume styles they wanted, even if it meant cutting off excess fabric to shorten hemlines and remove sleeves.

As Wilson (2003) points out, "The question of costume...is one of enormous importance for those who wish to appear to have what they do not have because that is often the best way of getting it later on" (p. 33). Over time, women began to outnumber men at masquerades to such an extent that many researchers currently see the male as having been emasculated by the strong presence of women, now the driving force of Carnival. This shift is significant, if only because such desires on the part of women to participate fully in Carnival mirror those of the slaves, which ultimately led to the development of modern Carnival.

Likewise, the emergence of women ultimately led to the modern masquerade costume. This modern costume includes the foundational components of a bikini top and bottom, which are then embellished with a combination of beads, sequins, and feathers

(see Figure 5). Figure 5 shows six female masqueraders in the bikini, beads, and feathers costume complete with matching headpiece. Also, masqueraders often decorate their bodies with glitter, temporary tattoos, and cosmetics to draw further attention to the areas of the body revealed by the bikini. Sheer tights are worn over the legs as a mode of coverage, but primarily to make the legs appear sleek and shiny.



Figure 5: Masqueraders in pretty mas.

The move away from costume representations of characters having historical and social significance toward styles that resemble a “Las Vegas showgirl” costume has led to debate among Carnival participants. As Green and Scher (2007) state, “One often

reads of Carnival as a form of resistance or as a steam valve or as the allowable expression of discontentment permitted by the powerful within certain limits” (p. 10).

Yet some question the extent to which present day pretty mas costume erases the traditional meanings associated with masquerade. While in the past costumes were deliberately used to express socio-political meanings, such as when upper-class white women dressed like slave girls and slaves dressed like their masters, the fear is that the showgirl costume of today is simply providing an opportunity for women to behave badly (Mason, 1998).

Pretty mas costume can in many ways be seen as an index of social and cultural change. As central to the performance aspect of Carnival, it is always used to communicate, regardless of its dominant form. Because it is so critical to the experience of Carnival, it must be investigated for its significance in the overall experience, yet it is easy to overlook its salience given the generic form it now takes. However, as this study suggests, this form may in fact speak to the true meanings of Carnival, and stem from the consumption of it as an experience.

The Consumption of Carnival

Carnavalesque celebrations (events with festive atmospheres) have become an integral part of many cultures, and provide utopian settings for individuals to escape from their daily realities (Nurse, 1991). The term *Carnavalesque*, originated by Mikhail Bakhtin (1964), is defined as a “temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order” (p. 10). Bakhtin (1984) specifies five characteristics of the Carnavalesque: (1) suspension of rank, privilege and prohibitions; (2) mocking of social

distinctions and norms; (3) living in the moment and for the moment; (4) a time of fluidity, instability and subjectivity; (4) a temporal state; and (5) societal safety valve vs. potential for radical change. Thus, the Carnavalesque represents a utopia for those needing that “safety valve” to release stress and rebel against their daily socio-economic struggles. Maclaran and Brown (2005) explain that “the discovery of a utopia always involves some type of dislocation, a traveling between worlds, whether physical or temporal in order to provide a setting in which to contrast and compare to the present” (p. 314). The Carnavalesque event can include cultural events such as Caribbean Carnivals and Mardi Gras, sporting events such as the Super Bowl and Nascar races, and can even extend to familial events such as Christmas, Thanksgiving, and weddings (Maclaran & Brown, 2005).

Some posit that festivals in general, and Carnavalesque celebrations in particular, may be considered grounds for contesting countervailing meanings, as they are sometimes characterized by homogeneous consumption (e.g. Holt, 1997; MacCannell, 1989; Manning, 1983; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). This homogeneous consumption may be experienced as liberating and emancipating (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). The consumption at Carnival fits Rook’s (1985) definition of “Ritual” as an activity that occurs in a fixed sequence, repeated over time and can be shared among groups with similar interests. The homogeneity of a heterogeneous group of people participating in a single festive event like Carnival or the Super Bowl develops into what Kates (2003) describes as a “multi-faceted consumption phenomenon,” where people of all walks of life tend to act out of character and engage in activities to bond with the

group. These activities oftentimes reflect a spirit of freedom and licentiousness that are common in festive environments, such as celebrating prior to Lent as a means of release before a time of restriction.

The excessive consumption behaviors of participants at these celebrations make them highly attractive to businesses and marketers. According to Consumer Culture Theory (i.e., the study of marketplace cultures), consumers forge feelings of social solidarity and create distinctive, fragmentary, self-selected, and sometimes transient cultural worlds through the pursuit of common consumption interests (Belk & Costa 1998; Kozinets 2001; Schouten & Mc Alexander 1995). For example, the homogenous consumption practices of otherwise heterogeneous participants attending an amusement park (O'Guinn & Belk, 2001). Over the years, many of these events have caught the attention of marketers looking to find new ways to profit from already established consumption rituals, and to influence the creation of new consumption rituals. Their basic objective, as Gotham (2002) asserts, is to transform these "public spaces into privatized consumption spaces" (p. 1738) by tapping into the desires of consumers through the use of seductive marketing techniques, brand alignment, and brand extension. Marketers realize that they can add to participants' experiences and foster strong desires among those yet to attend. This is the case even during the yearly united stand against consumerism and branding found at the "Burning Man" festival (Belk & Kozinets, 2005; Kozinets, 2002).

Sources of revenue may come not only from the day(s) of the event, but also from the months and weeks leading up to the event. For example, Scher (2002) notes that in

Trinidad, revenues related to Carnival begin flowing during the Christmas season, as Boxing Day (the day after Christmas), signals the beginning of the Carnival season and the influx of tourists. This tourist traffic provides profits to hotels and restaurants, and from souvenirs, admission tickets and costumes. Thus, Carnavalesque celebrations are highly visible, participatory, and symbolic of an eclectic mélange of cultural meanings of which consumption is an important part (Kates, 2003).

Another facet of consumption relates to socio-economic class distinctions within Trinidad. Trinidad saw the development of a middle class after the country's oil boom (Green & Scher, 2004). Consequently, Trinidad Carnival has expanded to become defined by the larger, more elaborate and lavish mas bands. Therefore, it is now common for masqueraders to participate in conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1899) by choosing products, such as costumes, as a means to display their wealth (Shipman, 2004). As Onkvisit & Shaw (1987) posit, consumers tend to select products that correspond to their self-concept. Yet as Carnival has become more global and mas bands seek higher profits, variation in costumes styles have decreased. Means of differentiation have become limited to differences in color and the placement of feathers and beads (Mason, 1998). Therefore, it is necessary to examine how masqueraders use costume to differentiate among themselves and stand out in the crowd of similarly dressed masqueraders.

Global Forces Shaping Carnival

Giddens's (1990) defines globalization as "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" (p. 64). Trinidad Carnival practices

have gained global appeal throughout the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Nurse (2004) calls this development the “intersection of globalization and diasporization” (p. 245). Currently, a hybrid form of Trinidad Carnival exists in the Caribbean and every major city in North America and Britain (Nurse, 1999). This global spread arose out of the increased opportunities provided by economic and technological developments that came with the onslaught of industrialization and globalization. Nurse (1999) explains that these advancements led to a foreign demand for cheap immigrant labor, improved transportation, and thus the emergence of the transnational Trinidad. But the relocation of locals to North America and Britain to pursue employment and educational opportunities also resulted in the spreading of their cultural practices. As the slaves brought their African heritage and traditions with them to create their own style of Carnival, so have these transnationals brought their version of Carnival to their foreign countries (Cohen, 1997). These Caribbean-style Carnivals have become some of the most popular and highly anticipated transnational celebrations in the world (Manning, 1990).

The global spread of Carnival has provided the opportunity for entrepreneurs to capitalize on its popularity. Consequently, many of the “major players” are currently arguing over the right to define Carnival and to control how it is marketed. Ensuring that those who profit from Carnival do so for the betterment of the country’s people and culture is a major issue within the literature (Green, 2002). The primary concern is that a singular focus on the more profitable aspects of the revelry may, in turn, lead to the disappearance of its valued traditions.

Commodifying Carnival

Green (2007) explains that defining Carnival is becoming more problematic because the people involved in its marketing cannot agree on what 21st century Trinidad Carnival is. The desire to commodify Carnival, to make it more widespread and more common, is a desire that Green (2002) believes produces “well-intentioned yet misplaced cultural nationalism” (p. 203). Those who seek to capitalize on Carnival are called “cultural brokers,” or those who “commodify cultural products and practices that they believe possess greater cultural authenticity” (p. 203). For example, some may capitalize on the fun aspects of Carnival to tap into the lifestyle of the younger generations, whereas others may want to preserve the traditional events that are symbolic of what makes Trinidad Carnival authentic. Those who seek to preserve the traditional elements of Carnival are concerned that the Carnival that appeals to the broader international market is one created by foreign marketers to lure the consumer by depicting Trinidad Carnival as just another Mardi Gras or Brazilian Carnival (Green, 2007).

Foreign marketers, in this context, are those international marketers who seek to capitalize on the global appeal of Trinidad Carnival within foreign markets. These marketers are responsible for spearheading hybrid Carnivals, which serve as a method of “promoting cultural identity and sociopolitical integration within the Caribbean diasporic community as well as with the host society” (Nurse, 1991, p. 675). Indeed, the profitability of Carnival can be seen from its global revenues; a conservative estimate reveals that as far back as 1991 Caribana (Carnival in Canada) contributed \$180 million

to the tourism economy and that in the US, the West Indian American Festival brought in a \$70 million influx from visitors (Nurse, 1991).

Global attempts to imitate Trinidad Carnival draw criticism, in that most are derivative of actual Carnival practices. For example, calypso and soca are the musical forms of Trinidad and traditionally played at Carnival. However, at hybrid Carnivals, reggae, a music style traditional to Jamaica, is often played to appeal to the crowds (Nurse, 1999). Similarly, as the costume form becomes more homogenized and the focus shifts to playing mas for fun, it is easy to see how the line between authentic Carnival and global street parties has become blurred. Moreover, foreigners at Trinidad Carnival are likely to get the impression that the event is solely about partying, drinking, ‘wining’ (Trinidad style dance), and having a good time. This perception either serves to increase attendance at Trinidad Carnival or leaves the spectator to conclude that Carnival is no different than Mardi Gras. Ultimately, this could threaten the authenticity of Trinidad Carnival, and as Scher (2003) notes, “the idea that soon no one would be able to tell Trinidad Carnival from any other Caribbean festival and Trinidadian authority/authorship would be lost” (p. 473).

In business, solutions to marketing problems are oftentimes addressed by interviewing the target market. The research that currently exists on Carnival does not include the spectator’s perspective. Questions could be asked that would help provide an understanding of the uniqueness of Trinidad Carnival. Why do foreigners attend? What influences their choice of events? What would they like to know about Trinidad Carnival? In gaining the perspectives of the tourists, areas of further economic

expansion, such as motivations for souvenir purchasing, can be explored. Participants of festive events often seek to crystallize lived experience through the purchase of a souvenir. A broadening of perspectives to include the spectator would help to develop an understanding of what makes the Trinidad Carnival experience unique.

Commercialization and Mas Costume

As Carnival has broadened its appeal, masquerade costume has transformed. The “pretty mas” of the traditional Carnival were costumes intricately designed and constructed to display the artistic skills of costume designers (Hill, 1962). They were made from considerable amounts of cloth, and provided adequate covering for the body, as modesty was a respected and expected value in society (Mason, 1998). Considerable emphasis was placed on differentiation between bands and character personification through costume. Presently, “pretty mas” has evolved to reflect a more global look commonly referred to as the “bikini-isation” of Carnival (Mason, 1998, p. 135).

Costume designers offer these bikini styles to appeal to the global consumer. But the more generic the costume, the less artistic skill is needed. Indeed, industrialization has made it possible to produce a wider variety of costume materials that allow for better fit and flexibility (Mason, 1998). But it has also led to the homogenization of costume styles. Industrialization also provides the means to decrease cost by mass production, and, as a result, to increase profits (Mason, 1998). In turn, a focus on increased profits has led to decreased demand for the traditional form of costume and thus traditional masquerade performances (Scher, 2002).

Along with industrialization and globalization, the literature highlights the participation of women as the third of three main “threats” to maintaining the cultural integrity of Trinidad Carnival. Women have become the driving force behind what has become highly sexualized masquerade performance at Carnival (Mason, 1998). For women, this behavior is done in the context of group solidarity and with the goal of experiencing release with friends. Nevertheless, the wine and jam Carnival by young middle class women is seen by some as unpatriotic, culturally destructive, and an economic threat (Scher, 2003, p. 473). While the impact of women’s visible presence and raucous behavior at Carnival continues to be debated, given the large number of women participating as masqueraders, their presence is clearly not a threat to the economy.

At the same time that women have become the main target market, many foreign ideas and materials have been infused into the design of mas costume. For instance, elements of the Brazilian costume have become incorporated into some of the costumes, and particularly bikini tops made of wire frames. While these costumes are not yet worn by the majority, the style is becoming more popular every year.

Masqueraders take their public unveiling seriously, as each wants to be the one captured on camera by the “metropolitan eyes” (i.e., eyes of foreign visitors) (Green, 2007, p. 209). Playing mas is becoming more costly as masqueraders are competing for the attention of the captive audience. Fierce competition exists between masqueraders, which is evident by the time, effort, and money they invest into having the best looking costume for their “public unveiling.” Indeed, preliminary research revealed that

masqueraders are doing things like matching their tights and wigs to their costumes to stand out (see Figure 6). Clearly this is an attempt to individualize one's appearance, and to make it unique within the bounds of the mas band's dictates.



Figure 6: Masquerader with green (as opposed to tan) stockings.

Based on the literature, the continued evolution of Carnival seems inevitable as its global appeal grows. Designers and entrepreneurs have adapted to the changing needs of Carnival consumers, and capitalized on the improved technologies and methods in costume design made possible by the global economy. Carnival in general is now a 'big business' and one that, on average, attracts forty-five thousand people to Trinidad per

year (Tourism Development Company, 2009). Obviously, to call present day Carnival “inauthentic” is to ignore the significance of its global appeal. As Hannerz (1991) explains, changes in Trinidad Carnival are simply indicative of a changing world,

The twentieth century has been a unique period in world cultural history. Humankind has finally bid farewell to that world which could with some credibility be seen as a cultural mosaic of separate pieces with hard, well-defined edges. Because of the great increase in the traffic of culture, the large scale transfer of meaning systems and symbolic forms, the world is increasingly becoming one not only in political and economic terms, as in the climactic period of colonialism, but in terms of its cultural construction as well, a global ecumene of persistent cultural interaction and exchange. (p. 107)

Summary

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of research pertinent to understanding Carnival. An explanation of Carnival was provided and discussion of costume and consumption was included. Costume as a means to transform the self and the importance of performance relative to Trinidad Carnival were explained. The impact of globalization on Carnival and its costume was addressed. In the next chapter, the research methodology is explained and data collection methods are discussed.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This study seeks to understand the meanings communicated by masquerade costume at Trinidad Carnival. As discussed in Chapter I, an interpretive research design was used to achieve the objectives of the study. The four specific objectives are to: (a) examine the form of masquerade costume worn at Carnival; (b) investigate the meanings that are associated with this costume; (c) explore the cultural and social significance of these meanings; (d) explore what these meanings communicate about the experience of Trinidad Carnival. As discussed in Chapter II, this study fills two gaps in the existing literature. First, it examines masquerade costume as central to the essence of the Carnival experience. Second, it includes the perspectives and experiences of young (aged 18-40) masquerade participants.

This chapter provides a discussion of the research methodology used in the study. First, an overview of interpretive methodology, and specifically the ethnographic approach, is provided. Specific methods used to collect data are then outlined. Finally, an explanation of the approach to analysis and interpretation of the data is provided. Also included is a discussion of how my status as a native Trinidadian required reflexive data collection and iterative analysis processes to ensure that the interpretation represents the Carnival participants' lived experiences to the fullest extent possible.

Ethnography as Interpretive Inquiry

An interpretive approach to inquiry was used to explore masquerade costume at Trinidad Carnival. An interpretative approach is best suited to achieve the objectives of this study because of its focus on understanding the perceptions of participants through lived experience. As Schwandt (2000) explains, there are three basic tenets of the interpretive paradigm: (1) human action is viewed as meaningful; (2) there is an ethical commitment and respect given to the life world; and (3) the epistemological belief that humans' subjective realities can be grasped in an objective manner (p. 93). Interpretive inquiry is a systematic approach to understanding the ways that people subjectively experience their world (van Maanen, 1975). To conduct interpretive inquiry requires that the researcher understand the lived experiences of the participants through their eyes. As a process, interpretive inquiry builds understanding through immersion into the phenomenon. As Jax (1989) explains:

An interpretive scientist questions what something or someone is really like. The intent is to interpret the meaning of a human experience. The research takes a holistic approach and looks for emergent patterns from which to make interpretation. This may be done through various means such as fieldwork, observation, and interviewing. The focus is not to generalize or to make universal laws, but to search for meaning within a specific context or situation. (p. 65)

Because this research looks at costume within the context of Trinidad Carnival, it requires that data be collected in the field. As a type of interpretive research, ethnography is typically used to understand lived experience in cultural context. As Genzuck (2003) explains, there are three fundamental components of the ethnographic method: (1) naturalism – conducting research in the natural settings of the phenomenon

under study; (2) understanding – the goal of gaining an intersubjective understanding; and (3) discovery – the inductive approach to understanding and developing themes to explain the phenomenon in context of the broader society. These components are in line with the primary assumptions of interpretive research (Hultgren, 1994). Moreover, Tedlock (2000) describes ethnography as an “ongoing attempt to place specific encounters, events, and understanding into a fuller, more meaningful context” (p. 454). Because Carnival is a phenomenon of critical significance to Trinidad culture and society, an ethnographic approach permitted deeper investigation of its meanings.

Van Maanen (1982) explains that an ethnographic approach provides

[a] cultural description...that can emerge only from a lengthy period of intimate study and residence in a given social setting. It calls for the acquired knowledge of the always special language spoken in that setting, first-hand participation in some of the activities that take place there, and most critically a deep reliance on intensive work with a few informants drawn from the setting. (p. 103)

For the present study, I spent two months in Trinidad during the Carnival season to “traverse both territorial and semantic boundaries” (Tedlock, 2000, p. 455).

Ethnographers are in a better position than any other type of researcher to understand the beliefs, motivations, and behaviors of their participants because of the close and prolonged interactions with participants in their everyday lives (Hammersley, 1992). Yet the multi-faceted and fast-paced environment of Trinidad Carnival required a research approach that is fluid and flexible. Mason (1996) notes that “qualitative [interpretive] research designs invariably need to allow for flexibility and for decision making to take place as the research process proceeds” (p. 33). This flexibility allows the researcher to

shift focus and integrate new information as needed for enriching the scope of interpretation.

Data Collection Methods

Interpretive inquiry is focused on revealing meanings of experience as the essence of a phenomenon. As discussed, ethnographic methods were used to collect data in Trinidad. With ethnography, the researcher is the main data collection tool as he/she engages in participant observation to understand the emic perspective of the participants. Alongside participant observation, data collection methods that were used to achieve this perspective include in-depth interviews and visual documentation.

Participant Observation

Participant observation is a common technique used to collect ethnographic data. Participant observation is important to gain an in-depth perspective on the cultural phenomenon being studied. As Merriam (1998) explains,

As an outsider an observer will notice things that have become routine to the participants themselves, things that may lead to understanding the context.... Observation makes it possible to record behavior as it is happening. (p. 96)

While in the field, I participated in as many Carnival and pre-Carnival activities as possible. The goal was to understand the overall experience of Carnival as it is happening, but this also includes the preparations leading up to the event. The preparatory phase generally intensifies the day after Christmas -- Boxing Day -- which represents the start of the Carnival season. Therefore, I collected data as much during the preparations as during the event itself.

It is necessary to be systematic in collecting data through participant observation. As Sanders (1987) explains, comprehensive recording of observations allows for this systematic approach in the form of field notes. Field notes are used to describe the setting and the actors, including their interactions and relationships. There are three types of field notes: substantive field notes, methodological field notes, and analytic field notes (Burgess, 1982). Substantive field notes provided a record of the who, what, when, and where details of my research process. These notes provided clarity and structure to my data collection and transcription processes. Methodological field notes were used as an ongoing assessment tool during the data collection process and for recording procedures of the research. And lastly, analytical field notes were recorded for iterative documentation of quick analyses based on observations in the field and potential meanings of the phenomena. I integrated all three types into a comprehensive set of field notes documenting the data collection process, my personal thoughts, impressions, and insights, as well as the foundations for analysis and interpretation.

Participant observation is typically used in conjunction with other data collection methods to “triangulate emerging findings” (Merriam, 1998, p. 96) and for cross-checking between multiple sources to corroborate interpretations. In this study, in-depth interviews and photographic documentation were used in conjunction with participant observation to fully examine the phenomenon of Trinidad Carnival.

In-Depth Interviews

While in the field I conducted in-depth interviews with a range of Carnival participants. Some interviews were planned and others were spontaneous. An interview

schedule that includes specific questions, a few topical areas, and if possible something in between (Merriam, 1998), was used as a tentative guide. To decrease my anxieties, and increase my effectiveness and efficiency in the field, I conducted preliminary research in Trinidad during Carnival in February, 2009. Through the use of pilot interviews I was able to test the quality and clarity of my interview questions and work on my interview technique. Each participant was given a consent form to sign which included a description of the research objectives. They were also asked to give their permission to audio-tape the interview. Transcription and analysis of these interviews revealed a need for me to be mindful to avoid asking multiple questions, leading questions, and yes-or-no questions (Merriam, 1998). In addition, I came to understand the value of Rubin and Rubin's (1995) advice, "to leave a door open for further contact" (p. 124). In at least two cases, participants offered further information after the interview had formally ended, thereby providing the opportunity for further discussion.

Interviews were conducted at a location that was convenient to participants, which increased their level of comfort and led to increased disclosure of information. In-depth interviews conducted during fieldwork were similarly structured. I audio-taped all interviews with the participants' permission. The approved IRB consent form is included as Appendix A.

Visual Documentation

During participant observation, data was recorded via a combination of still and video camera images. Research data would be deficient if it did not include photographs, films, and videos, because these materials constitute essential evidence for the social

researcher (Bryman & Burgess, 1999). Moreover, photos, as Prosser and Schwartz (1998) describe, are paramount to enriching the data collected because the researcher

[C]an discover and demonstrate relationships that may be subtle or easily overlooked...communicate the feeling or suggest the emotion imparted by activities, environments, and interactions. And...provide a degree of tangible detail, a sense of being there and a way of knowing that may not readily translate into other symbolic modes of communication. (p. 116)

Because masquerade costume is visual, photo and video documentation was necessary for the purposes of analysis and interpretation. I photographed participants and took general photographs at Carnival events. Permission to photograph was requested from research participants, and when necessary, from others participating in the Carnival process. Due to the festive nature of the environment and frequency of spectators with cameras at Carnival, individuals were more open to having their photos taken than they might otherwise be.

Reflexivity

Being a native of Trinidad required that I was conscious of any biases or preconceived notions of Carnival that I may have had going into the field. In discussing the role of the researcher, Bailey (2007) defines reflexivity as “critically thinking about how one’s status characteristics, values, and history, as well as the numerous choices one has made during the research can affect the results” (p. 6). My role within the field as both insider and outsider required me to be reflexive in my observations and conclusions. My experience was akin to De Freitas (2007), a Trinidadian anthropologist, when she writes, “I felt like the quintessential masquerader, negotiating two identities--native and

non-native, self and other--viscerally engaged, yet hyperalert to the sights, sounds, and smells that filled the early morning air” (p. 48). Insider status presents challenges, yet I was cautious not to allow my tacit knowledge and familiarity with the environment to shape the analysis and interpretation. However, it was beneficial in my interpretation of cultural meanings to the extent that it provided a context for what I saw and heard in the field, more so than if I were a non-native conducting the same research. Indeed, there are mixed feelings about whether neutrality can really be achieved. As van Maanen (1982) points out,

I think neutrality in field work an illusion. Neutrality is itself a role to be enacted and the meaning such a role will carry for people within and without the research setting will, most assuredly, not be neutral. (p. 115)

De Freitas (2007) elaborates,

All scholars who engage in anthropological work are in fact “natives” of some cultural space and time, but what makes them “anthropologists” is the ability to be reflexive, that is the ability to stand “inside” and “outside” their native cultures and bend back on them in order to understand, appreciate, and critique them. (p. 59)

Ultimately, I was mindful of my perspective as a researcher and Trinidad native and reflected on how this perspective, in part, shaped what I saw and how I interpreted it.

Participant Selection and Sample

Participant selection in any interpretive study is critical to creating an understanding of the phenomenon, and ultimately to the success of the research. Mason (1996) states, “Much of the intellectual work involved in sampling and selecting concerns

establishing an appropriate relationship between the sample or selection on the one hand, and the wider universe to which you see it as related to the other” (p. 84). In this study, participants were recruited through referrals and reflected a purposive sampling method. Participants were recruited through my own personal networks, reference groups, as well as through Carnival gatekeepers. The benefit of getting referrals from gatekeepers was that it established the informant’s trust in me and their commitment to the data collection process. As van Maanen (1982) points out, it is beneficial to have

[T]he intimate assistance of a few knowledgeable and reliable guides in the cultural setting who can run interference for the fieldworkers and provide testimony as to the fieldworker’s exemplary character to others. (p. 109)

The “face-to-face nature of ethnography” (Agar, 1986) decreases the number of respondents needed to procure a “thick description” (Geertz, 1973). In this study, a total of thirty-four individuals were interviewed. Participants were involved in a range of Carnival-related activities, including, but not limited to, masqueraders, costume designers, band and production managers, and corporate executives. Of these thirty-four, eleven were considered to “understand the culture [and are] able to reflect on it and articulate for the researcher what is going on” (Merriam, 1998, p. 85).

The thirty-four participants were divided into three groups. The first group was comprised of eight participants who were interviewed randomly during the Carnival festivities. The hope was to gain both structured and spontaneous feedback and ultimately a broader, more diverse set of perspectives on Carnival. When in the field, I purposefully selected these individuals based on their ability to add dimension to the

research by their unique characteristics. Three of Patton's (1990) criteria were used. The first criterion was level of intensity. Individuals chosen based on this criterion demonstrated a high level of commitment and involvement in Carnival preparation, such as someone who masquerades every year. The second criterion was the deviant case, or individuals who were extreme in their behavior in the Carnival setting. The third criterion was the opportunistic case, which includes individuals I gained access to from unexpected leads in the field. For example, I was at a mas band's break location and was introduced to two foreign masqueraders by an old classmate.

Generally, while in the field I listened to conversations amongst respective groups of people, and if they met any of the above criteria, I engaged in conversation with them with the aim of conducting an interview. I anticipated the need to be flexible with the date, time, and location of these interviews. If the individual granted me an interview immediately I obliged, and if the individual preferred a scheduled interview I was able to accommodate. Interview questions focused on what they enjoy most about Carnival, why they participate in Carnival, etc. (see Appendix B). Understanding the fleeting nature of the "onsite interview," I recognized the need to be flexible regarding duration, but aimed for at least 20 minutes per interview to ensure that substantive data was collected.

In the second group, the participants were interviewed more intensively. This group consisted of sixteen participants and included a mix of costume designers, corporate executives, a priest, masqueraders, and mas band managers. These sixteen participants were distinct in their Carnival activities, represented key Carnival roles, and were able to commit to the data collection process. Participants in this group were

interviewed one time for at least 40 minutes. The goal was to get an in-depth look into their experiences as they prepared for the upcoming Carnival.

Interview questions for these sixteen individuals were semi-structured. The goal was to map out their experiences of Carnival and gain insight into the build-up and challenges involved in being fully prepared to participate in Carnival events. Questions depended on the situation and the role of the participant (see Appendix C). For example, costume designer(s) and band manager(s) were asked to expound on some of the following topics: (1) impetus for costume creation; (2) lessons learned from the previous year; (3) challenges faced in meeting customer demand and solving customer issues; and (4) decision-making regarding mas band organization and logistics. In contrast, the questions asked of the priest were geared towards gaining insight into the associations between Carnival and Catholicism.

The third group included ten masqueraders who were not interviewed, but were asked to journal their Carnival preparations with regard to costume and appearance. Journal entries were informal and unstructured. The masqueraders were asked to address the following topics: (1) purchases and decision-making process for costumes and events; (2) challenges procuring or accessorizing the costume; (3) budget management (challenges making or adhering to a budget); and (4) any experience that enhanced or conflicted with the preparation for and/or participation in Carnival events. Journals provided unique insights into the preparation process, challenges, and problem solving strategies that contributed to the final costumed appearance and experience. The goal was to gain an understanding of the meanings assigned to costume and adornment

practices by a variety of Carnival participants. Appendix D includes the complete list of journal prompts.

All participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identities and increase their level of comfort with sharing information. The following is a list of participants by group:

Group 1:

1. Olivia – Foreign Masquerader, age 25
2. Halle – Trinidadian foreign-based masquerader, age 55
3. Neil – Masquerader, age 30
4. Xavier – Masquerader, age 43
5. Paul – Masquerader, age 38
6. Frank – Foreign Street Reveler, age 50
7. Ria – Foreign Masquerader, age 26
8. Tony – Masquerader, age 35

Group 2

1. Brian and Claire - King costume designers, ages 33
2. Kevin, Susan, and Wayne - Band managers, ages, 63, 60, 61
3. Aaron - Corporate executive for Entertainment Company, judge, composer, artist manager, age 57
4. Father Charles - Roman Catholic Priest, age 55
5. Martin - Band manager/owner of a band, age 45
6. Evette - Production manager, age 27

7. Lewis - Production manager and part owner of a band, age 35
8. John - Band Manager, age 37
9. Michael - Costume Designer, age 57
10. Helen – Masquerader, age 31
11. Rose – Masquerader, age 30
12. Kristy – Masquerader, age 31
13. Yanna – Masquerader, age 27

Group 3

1. Vicky – Masquerader, age, 33
2. Zola – Masquerader, age, 35
3. Genelle – Masquerader, age 22
4. Jennifer – Masquerader, age 31
5. Kerry – Masquerader, age 26
6. Dianne – Masquerader, age 32
7. Natasha – Masquerader, age 31
8. Andrew – Masquerader, age 35
9. Stephanie – Masquerader, age 27
10. Kofi – Masquerader, age 31

Data Analysis and Interpretation

One goal of this research was to understand masquerade costume through the lens of individuals participating in the Carnival experience. Once data collection was complete and the interviews transcribed, a phenomenological approach was used to

interpret participants' experiences. van Manen (1990) explains that the use of a phenomenological interpretation "aims to transform lived experience into a textual expression, its essence in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful" (p. 36). In this study, the key to interpreting Carnival experience was to understand it in terms of the broader socio-cultural context of Trinidadian society.

van Manen (1990) explains that lived experience is both "the starting point and end point of phenomenological research as it is the breathing of meaning" (p. 36). Data analysis procedures were ongoing, and involved a reflexive process of meaning development. Emergent themes were identified through an iterative process that occurred throughout data collection (Spiggle, 1994). It is important to note, as suggested by Belk, Sherry, & Wallendorf (1988), that

[t]he analysis of naturalistically obtained data is not an inclusive, discrete phase that follows data collection. Rather analysis begins during the initial collection of data and continues throughout the project, consistent with the emergent design of naturalistic inquiry. (p. 455)

This was the case for my study, in that analytic field notes were used to record the process of analysis and any insights that may be used to develop the interpretation.

Participants' perspectives on the current events, cultural meanings, and economic and social factors influencing present day Trinidad Carnival were explored. Based on analysis of the data, four conceptual areas emerged which are used to frame the interpretation: economic, social, cultural, and aesthetic. *Economic* includes the financial and cost related dynamics of Carnival at the micro and macro levels. *Social* is

understood to be those components of experience that help shape, and when interpreted, reveal the societal context in which Carnival operates. *Cultural* are those experiences that illustrate norms and expectations within the Trinidadian Carnival tradition. *Aesthetic* explores dress as lived experience and the most visible representation of meaning during Carnival celebrations.

The four conceptual areas are used as tools to explore the participants' perspectives and identify areas of discourse that contribute to the understanding of the broader significance of Carnival. Within each conceptual area, emergent themes are discussed based on pertinent issues and experiences shared by participants. The first area, *Embodying the Culture of Trinidad* (Chapter IV) explores the tension between tradition and modernity as played out through Carnival. It examines what changes in Carnival indicate about global influences on the culture of Trinidad. The second area *Aesthetics of Carnival* (Chapter V) addresses dress as experienced at Carnival. Issues such as changes in the form and meaning of masquerade dress, as well as the process of creating pretty mas, are discussed.

Chapter VI, *The Economics of Experience* is explored in terms of the financial strategies of businesses and entrepreneurs to increase profitability during Carnival and in turn, contribute to the strengthening of Trinidad's overall economy. The desire to expand the scope and appeal of Trinidad Carnival has led to concentrated and organized efforts to market Carnival internationally. For entrepreneurs involved in costume design and production, the emphasis is on optimizing resources, minimizing costs, and increasing profits. Modern day entrepreneurs utilize the benefits of the global economy by

outsourcing. Such strategies have altered the traditional approach to managing Carnival-related business. Chapter VII, *Experiences in Social Context*, includes themes that highlight the relationship between people and Carnival, and the value placed on the Carnival celebration is an index of social change.

It must be noted that though the four conceptual areas are distinct, they are also interrelated, in that as a whole they address the broader purpose of understanding present day Carnival pretty mas as the “voice” of the younger generation. In addition, while the thematic interpretation presented in the next four chapters is based on the participants’ perspectives and experiences, my “voice” structures the participants’ voices into a thematic “whole” designed to address the purpose and objectives of the study.

To ensure consistency between research questions, data, and interpretation, a variety of techniques were employed. I recorded field notes with “rich description” (Geertz, 1973) and used a personal journal to jot any unusual occurrences or emotions that framed my experience of data collection. Interviews were transcribed verbatim, and visual data recorded and documented. Triangulation of the field notes with the interview and visual data allowed for corroboration of findings and depth of interpretation.

To ensure the development of a credible interpretation, I collaborated with a number of core participants to confirm that the analysis accurately represents their experiences to the fullest extent possible. Once the interpretation was written, four participants were sent an electronic copy of a chapter and asked to assess the accuracy of the representation of their experiences. Participant confirmation permitted me to

corroborate my understanding with the participants' and to represent their voices to the fullest extent possible.

Carnival is a dynamic and multi-faceted experience. Its meanings change as the culture changes. Yet by necessity this study focuses on one "moment" in time. As Clifford (1986) explains,

Cultures do not hold still for their portraits. Attempts to make them do so always involve simplification and exclusion, selection of a temporal focus, the construction of particular self-other relationship, and the imposition or negotiation of a power relationship.

Ultimately, the goal was to employ a research methodology that crafts as accurate a reflection of Carnival as possible, and one that arrives at an interpretation of the myriad of cultural meanings that it embodies.

Summary

In this chapter, the methodological framework of the study was discussed. Objectives of interpretive research were outlined relative to the purpose of this study. Research design, data collection methods, and the participant sample were described. Lastly, the approach to analysis and interpretation was discussed. The next four chapters present the thematic interpretation of the data.

CHAPTER IV

INTERPRETING CARNIVAL: EMBODYING THE CULTURE OF TRINIDAD

Carnival represents the rich culture of Trinidad and encompasses many of the country's historical traditions. Data reveal that for most participants, being a part of Carnival is a means of engaging in the culture and heritage of the country. In this chapter, four themes help to define the link between culture and Carnival: (1) *Trinidad Carnival: Mecca*, (2) *Festivals versus Parades*, (3) *Multiple Roles*, and (4) *Costuming and Storytelling*. Commonalities that surfaced across participants' experiences help to define the issues that shape each theme.

Participants who were highly committed to Carnival usually had a long history of being involved in Carnival and related cultural activities, and did so out of a passion for preserving the practice. Participants think that there is an obvious difference between those entrepreneurs who participate for a genuine love of culture and those who are only interested in making a profit. Likewise, they thought that the former helped to keep Carnival a festival for the people, instead of turning it into one big parade. Finally, participants think that Trinidad has the most highly skilled artisans when it comes to putting Carnival together. For participants, all of these factors contribute to the rich culture of Trinidadian traditions exhibited by Carnival.

Trinidad Carnival: The Mecca

Participants think that Trinidad Carnival is superior to other Carnivals around the world. Although there are many international Carnivals that have used Trinidad Carnival as their inspiration, and in some cases are also the result of Trinidadian diasporas, participants believe there to be little comparison with the “real” thing. According to them, Trinidad’s form of celebration, its organization, and its local talents are unparalleled.

This belief in the superiority of Trinidad Carnival is balanced by a general concern that Trinidad is still somewhat provincial in mindset about Carnival. As Martin explains, Trinidad’s Carnival risks becoming obsolete if it is not marketed globally:

M: ...We are the Mecca, eh, Trinidad is the Mecca. We are the mother, and even including me, we should at least do more to keep it being the mother and not the grandmother, right? You know, because all the other Carnivals, the one hundred and something Carnivals around the world, pattern from us, [from] some little pockets of West Indians living in London or living in Amsterdam or living [wherever], who come together and go to the authorities and get a Carnival there. You know, wherever it is. But it have about one hundred and fifty something Carnivals around the world and they all pattern from Trinidad Carnival.

These “copy-cat” Carnivals, while they may pale in comparison, are a threat to Trinidad’s Carnival, and this includes those held in neighboring Caribbean countries whose citizens have traditionally flocked to Trinidad for its Carnival. Martin continues,

M: Um the Bajan Yankees [Barbados citizens living in US], they not coming back to Trinidad. Why? Because they have the same kinda costume, they have the same kinda costuming, that’s 2006 [shows me a brochure], that’s a band I design for in Barbados, it almost looking like Trinidad now, you know, but that’s Barbados. So they get the same caliber of costume, they have the big stadium ...we taking away the stage [main judging point to showcase the masquerade

costumes], you know, and we not adding, right? So you understanding what going on. So we fast becoming the grandmother, and you know when you become a grandmother and you get old, you know what happens. So I am not saying it would happen, but we need to raise the bar, myself, the people involved, the authorities. Barbados, the Bajan Yankees, why they coming here? They have the same type of costumes. They have the nice beach. They family there, and they not getting rob (laughs hysterically). So we have to be careful.

Martin asserts that Barbados citizens (Bajans) who live in the United States (Bajan Yankees) are opting to go home to Barbados to play mas, instead of coming to Trinidad Carnival as they traditionally did. He thinks that this is only logical, considering they have similar offerings, acclaimed beaches, and their crime rate is lower than Trinidad's. Indeed, Trinidad Carnival is facing rising global competition as copy-cat Carnivals can watch, learn, and offer similar services to their Carnival goers. Ultimately, he believes that Carnival leaders, such as himself, need to ensure that Trinidad Carnival remains the most sought-after of the world Carnivals.

Olivia, a Bajan who chose to participate in Trinidad Carnival instead of the one in Barbados, was asked to share what she thought about the appeal of Trinidad's Carnival:

O: I am from Barbados and we only have one day [of mas], but the two days of mas is very different.

I: So what do you think differentiates Trinidad Carnival from the rest of the world?

O: I think the co-ordination, [for] one. It takes a lot more coordination. Whether in our own opinion it may not be of a particular standard, even if you compare it to other Carnivals, the coordination to really have all those bands coming across. And when you look at security and you look at the runners and the judges, when you look at the water trucks, the toilet, the drinks, it's a lot of coordination that they could get applauded for. Coordination at Carnival is as pretty [close] second or better than the others.

I: So you think it is way more organized than the others?

O: Yes, way more organized. And the experience on the road too ...the road is really hassle free. They have beautiful women in Trinidad and you still free to wine and palance [a new dance popularized from the most popular soca at Trinidad Carnival that year] without being too overcrowded by men. It [being overcrowded by men] happens a lot in Barbados and it does not happen a lot here, so you feel a lot more relaxed, free up, and you could do anything. Then you could wine [Trinidad dance style] and go home.

I: So you like the new form of band security?

O: I like that.

I: What do you think is the main difference between Trinidad Carnival and the rest?

O: The preparation aspect, the costume is very festive, you know. They really put a lot of time into the costumes.

I: So you don't think the costumes are the same?

O: No, no! [In] Trinidad, I don't know how many weeks they prepare in making the costumes and how many people they had to get, but we could clearly see that it took a lot of time and it had a lot of detail. There are so many different bands and so many different sections and different themes. And I know that it must be real difficult to make every section unique. But somehow it happens, because you could tell who in Tribe, who in Spice and the section they were in and the theme. When you look at the frontline, they are really nice, because there is a front line and a back line, right. The front line costumes are very nice....You get a lot of accessories, the quality that you get, the headpiece the feathers, all the other accessories...it's really worth the money. In Barbados you don't even get half [of the quality and accessories]. And you do this for two days, eh, you could wear the piece for two days and you get two days of Carnival for the price.

I: So you feel the money is worth it?

O: Yes.

For Olivia, the price of participation in Trinidad Carnival is worth every penny. She states that the two days of Carnival, versus the one day in Barbados, and the quality of the costumes and accessories justifies the cost of the masquerade costume. She believes that Trinidad has mastered the art of producing a Carnival event that is organized and safe, where females can feel free to dance without the fear of being pestered by men. Olivia's description of Trinidad Carnival's strengths supports the idea that Trinidad Carnival is still Carnival Mecca.

While most participants think that Trinidad's Carnival is superior, Halle, a Trinidadian citizen living in the United States, strongly believes that the locals are not socialized to appreciate the value of Trinidad's rich culture. In her mind, it is not until they leave to live abroad that they begin to appreciate it.

H: You see ...I think ...most of us [are] not brought up in a way to appreciate, and we take it [Trinidad culture] for granted. So when you leave, of course it's all this excitement and splendor, or so you think until there long enough, and the vacation's over and then you have, not necessarily enough, but you begin to see what you have. And you begin to truly appreciate. Maybe you will never come back, but you become much more appreciative when you get a chance to compare it, and it also makes you more aware of other cultures. We are very biased in Trinidad. We are very arrogant people. No appreciation. We weren't taught to appreciate. We don't know what we have. It starts from the top. Because um, you know when I was brought up, when I was growing up, um, the three "Rs" were most important: Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic, you know, like beating pan was not important, sports was not important.

I: You mean only academics?

H: Yes, so mostly academics. But when you go to other countries, they not necessarily brighter than we are, but they are more well rounded so that's why pan in schools [is] great because these children grow up appreciating the pan and they know the history about it. As opposed to people coming here and they take it and go with it and we hear steel pan all over. And now children are learning to read music, as opposed to those guys [pan players], even that was phenomenal that these guys could play notes without having a sheet of paper, they can't read music, but at the same time it is a setback. But children now are learning. So, it's good.

Halle believes the Trinidadian people to be misguided, to the extent that they are not socialized to appreciate what their country and culture have to offer. She states that the traditional focus on academics has resulted in a lopsided educational experience, where students were not being taught to develop diverse skills. She believes that recent changes in education, such as teaching pan, point the country in the right direction, and will help sustain Trinidad's culture through Carnival.

Embedded in Halle's excerpt is another issue: the unique skills of the Trinidadian people attract foreigners, who visit and learn from the locals, and then take what they learn home with them. Participants explained that Trinidad Carnival is the best because of such skills, whether in music, costume-making, or even the ability of Kings and Queens to carry their costumes without any mechanical assistance, such as a float, which is typically the case in other Carnivals. Martin elaborates on this,

M: I remember people from Brazil come here to see how we mold the headpiece, they still had the chicken wire with the "gazad paper" [old newspapers] and paint and the thing and it will look good because they have a parade... So what we have now is still, still unique. If you look at the parades in the United States or whatever the, the, Puerto Rican parade, or any, the Rose [Bowl] or something like that, but when you watch that, what you see is a trailer that drives, with people take time and they build things on it and they have all the mechanism. That in Trinidad, you see a man underneath the things that is almost as big as the trailer making movements. You ever watch eh, Vera [prominent King of Band], his costume? And he is a little old man and moving this thing. You ever see the Lizard that went down and almost walk? There are a few costumes back in the day, and that itself is still not back in the day, I will call that recent. If you know the name Sacred and Profane, if you do some research you will find that costume. Man Crab, you know, you actually seeing a crab moving, you know. Tan Tan and Saga Boy [all King/Queen of Bands], you understand what I am saying? So things like that, I would not call that back in the day, that's just recent. So we still have a lot of creativity in the mas, you understand what I am saying?

Brian and Claire, creators of King costumes, also talked about the ability of Trinidadians to perform in enormous costumes without assistance (see Figure 7). As finalists in the 2009 King of the Band competition (where Kings for each participating band compete for "Best Costume"), they explain the skill required of the King to carry the costume:

C: Fareed [King], he believes in um, which is something good, you should carry your costume, you should not wheel it around like a float. And he believes that as

well, you know. Once you put wheels on a costume it becomes a float, it is not a costume anymore, you know?

I: More like Mardi Gras?

C: Yes! It's just a big float. But a costume, you should be able to move [bring to life with movements] and if you see the size of the thing, and he's a small guy.

No lie...

B: I put it on and I could not even lift it up.

C: He's my height [Claire is around 5' 5"]. Just think about somebody my height. That's what he is, he is my height and he's probably a little more buff because he lift the little weights to be able to carry his costume. But if you see the size of this thing, span like all across here (demonstrates with her hand) it could not fit in here (speaks of the garage in the house where interview is taking place). It really high and he will just hold that and he will move the costume all the way there [across the competition stage] and all the way back.

B: 25 feet across by 18 feet high, I think.



Figure 7: King costume

They add that the King of the Band competitions are intense, and making it to the finals requires not just a creative costume, but a King with the skills to carry it in the

competition. As they explain, the judges specifically look for such skills in the competition:

C: Mac Farlane won and he had no wheels...

B: He did not have wheels...

C: And #3 as well...he was not on wheels as well. So three costumes in the entire competition, which was eliminated from fifty or more costumes, had no wheels and they were in, because that's where you get to see movement and that's where the skill is and that's where you see everything...

B: Because once your costume on wheels, it's only so much you could do with it. You could shake it and turn around in a circle and shake it and whatever...

C: All you could do is shake it, what you could do with that, really and truly you really can't do much with it.

Indeed, Trinidad Carnival is unique in many ways. According to participants, this is largely due to the talents and traditions of the Trinidadian people, many of whom do not realize how valuable these skills and traditions are. Foreign participants, however, seemed aware of the uniqueness of Trinidad culture and its Carnival, and an impromptu interview with a street reveler on Carnival Tuesday points to the affection many feel. The man, having dubbed himself a Trinidad Carnival veteran and "honorary Trini," explains,

F: During the summer in Washington DC, they have an open house for embassies. And so I went to Thailand, I went to Columbia, I went to Botswana, and I knew I had to end up at Trinidad and Tobago. Now everybody else have to go through security, through security, through security, just like you going on an airplane. In Trinidad, they had a steel band playing out front, everybody liming on the front porch and I just walk in, no security, nobody checking identity, and I just come in and say, "This is the way it should be, this is what you call free up." I left my staff in Haiti and I knew I could come for weeks. I left a bunch of staff over there, but once I could do my work on the internet, I could work. And for a week they have all been snowed in, in Washington DC.

I: But you were in sweet T&T?

F: I was minding my own business [attending Trinidad Carnival].

I: What's the one word you use to describe Trinidad Carnival?

F: The best two weeks of my year.

Festivals versus Parades

In describing what makes Trinidad Carnival so unique, participants most often talked about the difference between a festival and a parade. The assertion is that Trinidad Carnival is more of a festival, as opposed to global Carnivals that are usually celebrated in the form of a parade. For instance, Halle draws on her experience with different global Carnivals to explain the difference:

H: Like in Toronto, they had Caribana, but that was in the early stages, so it was truly a parade, so even though we had a section we stayed in [a] lane in the parade with horses to keep you in line. But now it's like a West Indian Carnival, you know, so I think those are the only two I have experienced. I have been in Florida but I did not even bother to go. I don't think there is anything like Trinidad....A lot of people know about Brazil, I think it's nothing like it [Trinidad Carnival], nothing. But Brazil is more well known and it's more, not organized, but with the street floats and all that kind of stuff, there is not that freedom. So I have not experienced that many, but I don't feel like I need to. I don't think that there is anything that could match up, I will always find flaws, you know what I mean.

One commonly mentioned comparison is that of Trinidad Carnival and Brazil's Rio Carnival. But as Martin explains,

M: Brazil is something slightly different. Brazil Carnival is not better than our Carnival you know, it's just how they showcase the Carnival there. ...You have to belong to a Samba school and the girl who is the Queen, they will train her and bring her up, teach her the dance and to show her she's the Queen, that kind of stuff. And then they will have a competition before and if you good enough then you will go through that dome [where the parade is held] with bleachers on each side.

In other words, Brazil's approach to Carnival is quite different from that of Trinidad. Brazilian Carnival is highly structured. Unlike Trinidad's street festival, where spectators are sometimes allowed to "jump up" (join in) with a band, Brazilian Carnival is a parade, a highly coordinated event full of costumed performances by masqueraders who have trained for months to fully execute their character on stage. This staged parade takes place in a stadium (dome) rather than on the streets. Rio's trademark dome parade, according to participants, is one of the reasons why its Carnival is more popular than Trinidad's Carnival. The former's approach makes it easier to display the cohesiveness of costumes without the distraction of non-costumed spectators. In contrast, participants explain that Trinidad Carnival has traditionally been more individualistic in focus, and even with the introduction of organized masquerade bands, spectators have been allowed to "jump up" with a band if they felt compelled to do so.

Kevin, Susan and Wayne share their views on the global Carnivals they have experienced, and their opinions differ on whether some of the structure and restrictions of the parade style should be adopted for Trinidad Carnival.

K: Well I've been to Carnival in Notting Hill [London], I have been to Carnival in New York, I have been to Carnival in Toronto, I've been to Carnival in Barbados and there is nothing like a Trinidad Carnival. All those Carnivals is a route you have [to] pass on which is barricaded, too regimented.

S: But we need a little more regimentation in our Carnival, maybe not to the extent of Notting Hill, but we do need some regimentation.

I: Is Trinidad Carnival a parade?

S: That's a parade [Notting Hill Carnival], we are not a parade.

W: Anywhere around the world in North America, England, wherever, they refer to it [Carnival] as a "Parade." Trinidadians do not understand what a parade is when it comes to Carnival. Whenever the band leaves and they play all day and all night. If you go to Caribana, and North America it starts at 7 and it ends at 6,

you have police protection, you have cameras, you have road cleaners and they expect a march, one after the other.

S: We don't flow.

W: That's not the mentality here. You will see one band and then you will see another one and people having fun, what not. North American mentality does not understand, because they think of it as a parade, but we don't have a parade. We have a street festival, basically to put it in context.

S: Street bacchanal.

W: Brazil, my sister went to Brazil last year and she was very disappointed because everybody goes into a stadium. All that performance, she said to me she had to buy a ticket to go sit in a stadium and watch them parade in a stadium, not in the street and she said that was the worse money she every spent in her life.

S: You have to have a ticket to enter the stage. And if you see how regimented they are, they are beautifully regimented.

W: It's very regimented.

In general, the participants preferred the freedom of Trinidad Carnival. While Susan commented on the beauty of the well regimented showcase of costumes at Rio's

Carnival, her peers do not share her excitement or desire for that type of Carnival.

However, Susan feels that Trinidad should be a "little more regimented" because mas bands are a business, and it is unfair for non-paying spectators to benefit. Charging admission to view bands in a stadium would avoid this problem. In addition, she feels that the lack of regimentation also creates bottlenecks and slows the pace of the band, potentially decreasing the level of enjoyment of the masquerade experience.

Halle's experience with Trinidad Carnival echoes some of Susan's concerns. She admitted to not paying for a costume until this year, and instead, jumping up with her sister's band while wearing street clothes. I asked her why she decided to finally pay for a costume, when she did not have to. She explains,

H: For me, personally, it is a sense of belonging. Like when you don't have a costume, then you not part of the group, so they could always ask you to leave or

step out. The other thing is, the bands are so huge right now, I get really tired when they come over dancing, like just waiting, waiting, waiting on that one spot. I get tired so I have to move and because I have a costume it gives me the freedom to move wherever I want in the band, as opposed to if I had on my regular clothes I have to always have my sisters in check in case [I am asked to leave]. I think that is the main difference for me. People always jump in bands, but you know they move on, they don't kind of stay there the whole time. It's only, like, in the late evening that people kind of attach themselves to any band. I think that is the main thing.

Halle describes the challenges associated with being a "pirate" (a non-costumed spectator jumping with a band), in particular the lack of group membership and the risk of being asked by security to leave the band.

While traditionally Trinidad Carnival was more free and allowed non-paying spectators to join with a masquerade band, today's bands have begun to restrict this freedom more often. As Aaron explains, "Now you can't come in my band. I have a rope around my band. To make sure, if you come in, my security is going to kick you out." As Kevin, Susan, and Wayne discuss, the notion that some people can celebrate Carnival without paying for it is problematic. It is a dilemma, in that, on the one hand, the bands must focus on making a profit, but on the other, it makes Carnival less inclusive.

K: It's a people thing.

S: All the people who don't buy costumes want to be a part of it for free...

K: Kitchener made a calypso, "The road made to walk on Carnival day, so they cannot stop anybody from jumping in a band"

S: But some bands have got security now and they try to control it. Because we have paid for the music. So why should you come and take my music?

W: You pay for a costume, you pay for the music, you pay for the entertainment, you pay for the alcohol, you pay for the food, why should anybody just walk up?

S: The problem as well with the spectators is when in Ariapita Avenue, Adam Smith square, when we are coming off the stage, almost in single file because they are crowding and you can get back...

K: They have no barriers...

S: No control, no nothing...

W: And it takes away from the pageantry and our performance.

Although people enjoy the freedom of an unstructured approach to masquerade, this can create difficulties in maintaining order and fairness. Ultimately, masquerade participants would like to see more of a hybrid approach, one that keeps the spirit of Trinidad Carnival, but respects the financial investments of mas band companies and masqueraders.

Multiple Roles

For most of the respondents, participation in Carnival is rooted in family background and/or artistic interests. Some admitted that Carnival was a passion of their parents, thus they were exposed to it every year while growing up, while others had a genuine love for Trinidad's cultural art forms. Most explained that their love for culture was what motivated them to get involved in Carnival, and especially those who are into the business of Carnival.

A commitment to culture led some participants to take on multiple roles. For example, Martin, a mas band manager, says that people call him a "cultural ambassador," but he prefers to call himself a "cultural hustler," due to his many roles during Carnival.

M: I really can't describe my role in Carnival for this year, um, most people who know me, they call me a "Cultural Ambassador." I call myself a "Cultural Hustler." But, I am a cultural person with the background coming out from the Best Village [Performing arts group that does traditional African dance styles] era and stuff, and um Carnival, the mas or the Carnival that you see ... is just a

natural progression of things I am doing for the culture basically. You know I am a cultural person. I mean I can play the African drums, I can play the tassa drum, I sing soca already, well calypso, plus I play the pan with Blue Diamonds and I, I, that's just me. Um, uh, I manage artists. I manage a lot of bands and stuff. I am also a fete promoter. I'm also announcer on radio type of stuff. So the Carnival part of it is just a natural progression, with what I did in culture. I played King [and] I used to play... the pan, then I went on to Fancy Sailor with bands like Third World...as the time evolves, um with Eddie Hart, Penny and Richard had a section in the band that, and I um, I used to play mas with them because I used to be in the gym a lot....I have been involved with mas over, over 25 years, yes, yeah over 25 years I'm in mas. And even before that I had a J'ouvert band as well called "Color Me Bad."

Martin's description of his roles highlights his love for culture and his connections to the traditions of Carnival. Other participants in the business of Carnival take on similarly multifaceted roles. Lewis and Aaron are two examples,

L: I have two roles, production manager in Rainbow and a soca artist....That is my part of the culture. I have been involved in mass since 2001. I actually had a private section in the band called Barborosa. And after 3 years in Barbarosa, then I went on to Poison for another 3 years.

A: Well I am involved in Carnival in a number of ways, our objective as the Entertainment Company of Trinidad [where he is a top executive] is to [inter]nationalize Carnival. The second involvement from a personal point of view, I am a composer, a producer, and I am a past person who handled the Copyright Organization of Trinidad and Tobago, in the nineties I was the principal there, Chairman of the Board. I have an interest in the contract management of the artists, so a lot of artists see me because of my expertise in that area....In fact, this year I have works that I have produced my own cd, I have about six songs recorded that have been played by a lot of the steel bands in Panorama and so on. So that's another, I have been doing that for the last sixteen years, putting out cds and what not on the market. I am also involved to a certain extent with people; well I do a lot of research on calypso and steelpan. I um, ran a television program from 1992-2000, a weekly one on interviewing a lot of calypsonians, people who involved in the pan movement and so on. I also do color commentary at Carnival time for the local television stations. We starting this weekend coming here doing coverage on the pan, then the calypso shows and so on. I never get involved in the actual parade of the bands. I find it to be a little boring, the commentary required on that, so I opt out on that one. But I have

worked with people who make the mas and I know what's involved...[a] very hard working area, very tedious, repetitive, sticking all those beads on this, threading this and what not. I have family connections who are very much involved in putting out a band, what it takes to put a band out on the road. So in a sense that's my involvement in Carnival.

Lewis and Aaron, like Martin, are involved in various facets of Carnival culture: the masquerade, the music, the performing arts, and the commentary. Their interest in Carnival, knowledge of its different practices, and appreciation of its cultural importance combine to make for a high level of involvement and ongoing commitment.

Some participants cited their parents' influence as the salient force that shaped their love for culture and dedication to Carnival. Evette, a production manager, explains how she got involved in Carnival:

E: I have been working with Stylistics 5 years. It will come 5 years come Carnival. But I have been into mas my whole life. My father is a wire bender by trade, so he has the skill of wire bending. So I learn that from home, and from growing up, you growing up in the Carnival background. So I came to Stylistics to nurture my skill and end up sticking, because I like it, and you have to have a passion for it to stay with it so long.

Interestingly, Evette admitted that sometimes her parents forced her to play mas, but she finds she enjoys it as an adult. She explains,

E: I play mas because after many, many long months of, well for me, when we was small growing up we had to play mas. No ifs, and no buts, and no maybes, sometimes we did not want to and we still had to play because Daddy [was] so much into this culture thing, but now looking back at it it's a benefit to me, because it brought me into it and it's something I love. I don't know, I just love it. I love the design and I love the challenge of trying to make something for the first time. I love when somebody else do something and you going to master it, you going to make that, and you going to do it better than their own, you know. So it's like a big challenge to me really, and um it's something I really enjoy. I

guess it's like, if your father is a deejay you be into music, you real love music because it is something you grow into, and I into mas. So years and years and years of just watching, I um kinda challenge myself, and through challenging myself, I realize that I have a skill.

The notion of family involvement in Carnival was common among the participants.

Stephanie explains that she plays mas every year because of a family history of masquerade involvement.

S: I will definitely participate again next year, God willing. As I said, this is something that I do every year. Carnival is in my blood, culturally and at a personal level. Carnival has always been a big deal for my family - my grandparents, parents and aunts. I have been playing mas since I was three years old and my parents still play mas. My grandmother played mas until she was close to 70 and her knee would no longer allow her to. Carnival for me is about this sense of family participation in a common activity and the happy feelings that surround this rich cultural expression of my people. It's something that words simply cannot express. It is something that one has to experience to know.

For people like Evette, Lewis, Aaron, Martin, and Stephanie, Carnival, like Trinidad culture, has ultimately become an important part of who they are.

Costuming and Storytelling

Participants often spoke about the masquerade costume with passion, as many feel that it represents the rich cultural background of Trinidad. Every year mas bands must decide on a theme that is unique and different from previous years, and tell the story of the theme through the names of the various band sections. The costume providers explain that despite criticisms that the "bikini, beads, and feathers" costumes all look the same, they in fact put a great deal of time into researching a theme, and as a result,

studying the dress of the country, culture, or folklore tale represented by the theme.

When asked about the creative process involved when choosing a theme and creating costumes to represent it, Martin responds in detail:

M: Um, we do a lot of research in terms of the theme. Um, if you could remember, I wouldn't go so far back, 2007, it come easy, it like riding a bike, you have to ride the bike to go to work so you have to learn to, you know (chuckles). In 2007 we played um *Hiawatha*, it's a story written by Henry Longfellow, it [is taught] in some schools and stuff. It's about a Native American Indian boy who grow up to be a famous warrior. So immediately it will be, native American Indian, but you wouldn't see, like when yuh say yuh playing Hiawatha native American Indian, when you look on the street and yuh looking for [a] bonnet going right down and that kinda stuff with the feathers on he foot and a man going, "ooo-ooo-ooo" (mocks Indian chants) and a man going like that, you understand, you wouldn't see that. Because I did not play Native American Indian, I played a story of a Native American Indian boy, who grow up to be a famous warrior so his lifestyle, his, you know, things when he was growing up. So you know, so yuh give it a little twist and it was easy for the next year, if you did Indian, to play African the next year. So I played African, but you would not see um, Ken Dampu, or Omoto Booboo coming down the road, or, man with a stick in his hand with a piece of red cloth tied on his shoulder and he jumping, you know, you would not see that because I played a journey through Africa and I call it, "A Journey Through Africa." You will see anything, because everything come from there. So if you see a naked man running down the road he ain't come from Africa or what (laughs loudly)? So, so, so then after that now I say well ok, in meh head now, if I play Native American Indian, I play Africa alright, it only fair I play Chinese. So I play "Kingdom of the Dragon," that's a symbol of the Chinese, that's one of the most significant symbols of the Chinese, you know. So we had, so but -my opening, I give you straight, you see the little opening and the little presentation I do, I give you the authentic thing, the Chinese you know, it might [be] Africans or whites or whoever Indians, but we have on we little Chinese garb and we do we little dance and we buss we little thing and we go, pow, pow, pow (does audible) and we play we little drum and we have the little dragon that they does dance with the two guys in the back, ah mean and that's why I [always place in] the first three bands when the competition come because I give a full presentation, you know.

As Martin explains, costume designers need to be very creative and strategic about developing themes for each year. He also describes how a portrayal of a theme through

costume, such as in the case of “Hiawatha,” is oftentimes not as literal as people may expect (see Figure 8). To Martin it is important to tell a story with your theme, but not necessarily a literal interpretation. Instead he sees it as a creative interpretation. As a result, Martin has found a way to stay current with his costume offerings, but maintain the “authenticity” of traditions by having “a full presentation” through performance.



Figure 8: Hiawatha brochure

Lewis, who is a production manager, describes a similar approach used by his band to translate a theme into costumes. He explains that they also seek to defy the stereotyped view of “bikini, beads, and feathers” masquerade bands.

L: We also wanted to portray...one of our challenges, and I had to put this out to the designers, is that um in the design, I wanted them to stay close to the theme as much as possible, and again we take kudos because we did not just want to be a bikini mas band where people say “It is just a different color, but where’s the theme?” This year, people actually said that this year Rainbow actually delivered on their theme. The theme this year is the Spice Route, last year we played the missing ingredient, which was our presentation from last year. Yuh know, what you cook with the spices that you cook with, you have the paprika and the whatever. This year we portrayed the body of where the spices started from, and they actually started in India, and you have the Spice Route, but we could not do all the countries, but we chose a few that we thought we could be creative with. So we come through countries like I say, India, Thailand, Morocco, you know etcetera, etcetera, Egypt, and all these other different countries, so when people walk through they could look at Greece and they could, say “This look like a Grecian costume,” you look at Thailand you could see Oriental, the Asian effect in there, you may not be able to tell right away that it is Thailand but you know it is an Asian type theme costume. You look at China, you could see China in there and even Mumbai, which is India, if you look at it you would see the effect of the guy with the half mask in it.

Most costume providers were very aware of the pressure that is put on them to dispel the misconception that little thought goes into designing costumes, that they all look alike, and are just “bikini, beads, and feathers” bands. For example, Brian and Claire, who work for Brian Mac Farlane, the most prominent costume designer and winner of the Band of the Year for the past three years, explain the extensive approach to costume development,

B: Well the first thing you have to do is come up with the concept, right. After that, as Mac Farlane would do, he would bring his concept to me, then I would

put it on paper, we get it framed and then he do a band launch which was in Tobago, um Buccoo Reef [Tobago] this year.

I: Why Tobago?

B: Well there's a host [of reasons].

C: Cause when he comes out with a band, it's not just um fire, like some say, "Ok fire nice."

B: It has a story, it has direction.

C: His own is Resurrection, and um, there's always a story behind the mas. And in this case he is resurrecting mas from what it used to be, so he bringing back the Minstrels, the Pierrot Grenade.

B: The Jab Jabs, Jab Molassies, the Fancy Sailors.

C: The Baby Dolls, everything....So what he did was he linked it to the Coral Reef, if I'm not mistaken, and what he did is, you know, the name of the band is "Resurrection," so he is resurrecting the old mas to bring it back. Remember the Coral Reef is like dying so it's also something to do with the Coral Reef and the resurrection of it, and you know and he links it somehow.

Their account highlights the extent to which some costume designers, such as Mac Farlane, will go to present a cohesive theme. Telling the story through costume, even a "bikini, beads, and feathers" costume, is important to ensuring a successful band.

Clearly, participants are committed to maintaining Trinidad's culture through Carnival, and to seeing that Carnival remains part of Trinidad's culture. Their commitment is indicated by yearly participation, the belief that the Trinidad Carnival experience is the best, and the multifaceted and deep level of engagement in Carnival they exhibit. Most are aware of the need to market Trinidad's Carnival to maintain its visibility among the world's most popular Carnival offerings, and shared their ideas about its primary competitors. Participants saw costume-making traditions as one of the key reasons why Trinidad's Carnival is superior to others, including Brazil's Carnival. Although costume providers who remain committed to costume traditions are rare in the face of demands for contemporary styles, many are winning competitions with costumes

that tell stories, thereby keeping some of the traditions alive. The next chapter focuses more in-depth on the aesthetics of Carnival, and particularly the masquerade costume, as it is the most visible embodiment of culture at Carnival.

CHAPTER V

INTERPRETING CARNIVAL: AESTHETICS AND THE CARNIVAL EXPERIENCE

Costume is the most central and highly visible aspect of Carnival today. As Trinidad society evolved from slavery to a free society, the costume of Carnival also evolved, though it consistently communicated freedom of expression. How the costume communicates this freedom, however, has changed over time. Four themes emerged from the data with regard to costume form and meaning and are elaborated upon in this chapter: (1) *Producing the Costume*, (2) *Sexy Sells*, (3) *Choosing a Mas Band*, and (4) *Revolving Styles, Changing Meanings*.

Data reveal that costume providers play a critical role in the production of Carnival. Masqueraders and spectators alike anticipate a dazzling array of costumes each year, so there is considerable pressure on costume providers to meet expectations. Pleasing the masqueraders' aesthetic desires translates into increased participation and thus profits for the costume provider's masquerade band.

According to participants, the popular form of mas costume today is the "bikini, beads, and feathers" costume. As discussed in the previous chapter, participants think that costume creation is a key strength of Trinidad Carnival, a skill that differentiates it from global competitors. Costumers explain that the costume form many consider "skimpy" so popular today actually involves multiple production stages and requires meticulous attention to detail. The production team has to be creative, and must have the

skills to place each bead and feather properly to ensure that the end product looks exactly like the prototype. They acknowledge that this process requires patience more than anything.

Costume providers explained that to produce the “bikini, beads, and feathers,” form of costume is to survive in the masquerade business. Participants agreed, explaining that if the costume is not sexy, it does not sell. The competitive nature and high cost of the masquerade business does not allow for risk taking or deviation from the norm, and for this reason, most costume providers admitted to yielding to popular demands.

Beyond the style of costume are the meanings associated with masquerade. With the younger generation influencing Carnival aesthetics, participants explained that a shift from traditional mas costume form and meanings was inevitable. This shift has led to tension between the older and younger generations. Regardless, both generations agree that tradition should not be lost and must maintain a presence alongside the modern in today’s Carnival.

Producing the Costume

As masqueraders need costumes in order to formally participate in Carnival celebrations, costume creation is critical. Today, the most popular costume form is a bikini and headpiece adorned with beads and feathers. Costume providers describe a costume production process that involves strategic planning, foresight, and a high degree of micro-management. When a costume provider can begin the production process depends on whether he/she owns an entire mas band, or is just producing a section of a

larger band. Martin, a band manager with a production facility in his “mas camp” (the headquarters of a mas band), has the flexibility to start the production process whenever he wants, as he is not dependent on outside costume artists to create his band’s costume. His main concern is to acquire the necessary materials early to avoid the rush and eliminate the possibility of poor workmanship and missed deadlines. Lewis, on the other hand, faces such challenges because his band does not have its own “mas camp,” and thus has to use outside producers.

L: It’s different, there are a lot of bands out there [but] you don’t have [many] producers. Sometimes people take work from you and they can’t deliver, because they [are just] looking at the monetary value. They would put you in trouble, and again the masquerader won’t know these things. And you go to a supplier and he has this band and that band, but he looking for more work. He’s thinking about the money. He’s not thinking about delivery time. When you drop your materials way in advance he’s like, “Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, I am going drop it for you,” and you thinking this person is experienced, and before you know it, you in trouble ‘cause you go there and you see your [headpieces] half way made and not decorated. It is a process ...you have to have it [costume] neat and well made, [and] then you need to make your stuff on time.

Kevin and his team manage a section of a larger band. As he explains, this means they must wait for the approval from the band’s management to start the costume production process. For Kevin, permission is granted around June. When asked how he knows how many costumes to make, he explains,

K: We have to jump the gun. We can’t wait on orders. Before Christmas we only had about 20 people, so we can’t wait until we get orders to start making. We just finish about 100 headpieces. So we have an idea of how much we going to get so we work [with] that [prediction]. Men so many, women so many...the only

problem is the sizes of the ladies to measure. So we have to wait on the bra and the belt...

Another challenge, Kevin points to how costume providers are forced to rely on information from past Carnivals to anticipate how many costumes they need to make in the current year.

Trinidadians have a long history of mastering the wire bending needed to make elaborate costumes, and according to participants, one of the things that Trinidad Carnival is still most respected for is its costumes. Although costume providers are outsourcing, there are some masquerade bands that continue to produce their costumes locally and maintain their own production room. Martin is one such costume provider who has his own production facilities as part of his overall “mas camp.” Evette, who is Martin’s production manager, provided a detailed explanation about the skill level required to produce the costumes, and specifically the headpieces, which are very technical. She stresses the importance of pattern-making, precision, and measurement as the key components to creating a superior costume:

E: It’s basically about skill, and in order for you to acquire the skill you have to have lots and lots of practice. When you first start, we kind of throw you out here and we kind of check to see how much you can do and ... if it’s braiding, or what you good at. Some people start off and they not good at anything, they just good at cutting. So what we will do is, we have patterns, cause everything start with a pattern, every single thing, this starts with a pattern [shows a headpiece], everything you see starts with [a] pattern and measurement. First, we try you to see if you could measure, because as simple as measurement is, everything is a measurement, [so] if you are off by a millimeter or even a centimeter it does cause a problem. If this side of the peak is longer than this side, then the peak will be twisted like that [shows an example of a head piece]. Right, so everything is about

measurement, everything is technical. We start with patterns and later on we try them with braiding, that is by using this trimming and putting it down in certain places to the edges and stuff. Not everybody is versed, especially when we using the glue gun, because the glue is very hot and you have a lot of problems with that, where people end up being burnt. But as you go along, with practice, you kind of get the [hang] of it.



Figure 9: Cutting out patterns.

When asked about the role of wire bending, Evette continues,

E: Well the most technical part of the job is wire bending, which is my specialty. [Also] the setting of the feathers, which once you have an understanding, and you have a little bit of experience and practice, again, you will be able to start setting. Like the placing of the feathers in the correct spots, because depending on where you put the feathers you get different effects.

Because of the intricate nature of making headpieces, Evette was asked to explain the process step by step. The following excerpts are from Evette's overall tutorial, starting with how they create the frame for the headpiece (Figure 10):

E: We use the wire to make the base [of] the headpiece, right, to bring down the peak so you will get the beauty on yuh forehead. It's basically just a piece of wire, a piece of sticky foam, one side is sticky and the other side is kind of soft, very soft, so when it get put on your head it's not going to hurt you. And what we do is we cut this and we measure it, draw a pattern, then cut it and then glue it, and then you take the wire and bend it in two. If it's one long big piece of wire, you bend it in two, find the center, then make a peak. And then we glue the wire and we set it to dry and stick the wire onto this [the foam] and that give it the form [to fit the] head. A strip of metal [is used] to give it flexibility, so that even if you have a big head, it could still fit you and it would not snap and break.



Figure 10: Step one: Headband with foam.

As Evette continues, she explains that the next step is to add the feathers (Figure 11):

“And what we do after that is we apply our feathers. And this is a tedious process, where you have to pick out the best of [the] feathers.”



Figure 11: Step two: Feathers.

Following this is suspending the feathers on the wires (Figure 12).



Figure 12: Wire frame used as a base for trim and feathers.

According to Evette, certain types of feathers are thinner than others, so thin feathers are layered one on top of each other to create fullness (Figure 13).



Figure 13: Laying feathers.

After the feathers are attached, different colored stones are applied to strips of patterned cardboard cut-outs. These and other trims (Figure 14) are applied to the frame to hide the wires, and then, if needed, feathers of contrasting colors are added to create more fullness.



Figure 14: Step three: Trims used to adorn headpiece.

According to Evette, the last step is to place strings of beads on the headpiece (Figure 15). These beads resemble earrings and hang down on either side of the headpiece.



Figure 15: Step four: Strings of beads are attached to make “earrings.”

Evette then shows a completed headpiece (Figure 16).



Figure 16: Completed headpiece.

Each headpiece is designed to match its corresponding costume and reflect the overall theme. For example, one of Evette's band's themes was India, so a chain was included on the headpiece to resemble the chains worn by Indian belly dancers (see Figure 17).

E: India is about jewelry, so that is why it is done up with so many stones and stuff like that, because they [are] into their jewelry, so everything is pretty, pretty, flashy, flashy. Everything has its equal amount of jewelry, right, that's about it.



Figure 17: Indian themed costume and headpiece with hanging jewelry.

Although the costume may not appear to be complicated, as Evette explains, the producer has to be meticulous to ensure that the patterns are cut correctly, and feathers and trim are carefully placed to create a superior end product.

In addition to the costume headpiece, many participants added to their costume via body decoration. Masquerader participants expressed a strong need to adorn the body in ways that would complement their costumes. Women, of course, can rely on jewelry and makeup. The men have fewer options and so the trend right now is to use body paint (see Figure 18). Xavier, a male masquerader, explains why he pays to get body paint for Carnival instead of wearing the costume he bought to participate in the band.

X: The costume is supposed to be part of Rainbow Merchant of Venice. So this was my interpretation, it was done by a female body art painter, and um this is what we come up with. So I wear the body paint to match the colors of the costume, and [wear] just part of the costume.

I: How important is it for you to body paint?

X: Well it is just decoration really. It is just being different.

I: So you still want to stand out?

X: Yeah it is just like that. You do things [to stand out]. They give you a costume and [it] is up to you to use it or not, and I choose not to, and they don't have a problem. Once you have they hand band on [a wrist band: evidence of a paid member], they don't have a problem with it.

Evidently, costuming to be different and stand out is important for masqueraders.

Kerry, a female masquerader, listed supplies purchased to prepare for Carnival in her journal. Elements of corporal adornment are clearly an important part of her preparation. She describes:

K: Since this was only my second year playing mas I can't say that I have an established routine. However, these are my additional purchases:

Carnival tights x 2 = \$ 60[10US]	Gold thread to 'reinforce' costume = \$6[1US]
Sequins for face = \$75[12.5US]	Spirit gum for sequins = \$20[3US]
False eyelashes = \$30[5US]	Wet wipes & hand sanitizer = \$20[3US]
Sunscreen = \$60[10US]	



Figure 18: Body paint shop.

Clearly, masquerade costumes are more than just bikinis and elaborate headpieces.

Participants seized the opportunity to be creative and considered the whole appearance.

Sexy Sells

The extreme popularity of the “bikini, beads, and feathers” form of pretty mas among the majority of masqueraders – the younger generation -- was commented on by

all participants. Participants discussed differences between two forms of pretty mas costume: the older and more traditional style costumes that the legendary Peter Minshall created and Brian Mac Farlane now continues, and the modern “bikini, beads, and feathers” costumes offered by the majority of bands. When asked about the popular choice for costumes, Evette explains,

E: I think younger masqueraders will choose to play with the pretty mas, as we will term it, because we have traditional mas, it [is] pretty too, but more along the lines of the long clothes, [like] the sailors have the long pants. And now [they are] into sexy, flash your body, you know, the boobs outside, yuh sexy underwear...they more into sexy. I guess it is [today's] dress code, everything is like that, because [for a] long time people used to dress up more, and now they wear tank top and jeans, or tank top and short skirts is the thing [now], it's the go.

Indeed, there has been a shift in tastes as Carnival has progressed, but as Evette points out, this change in costume style is a reflection of style trends in general.

The demand for more sexy clothing has influenced costume providers' designs and impacted their sales. Basically, costume providers think that their hands are tied, in that they are forced to give the younger generation the styles they demand, otherwise their costumes would not sell. Martin gives an example from personal experience,

M: As a matter of fact, a couple of years ago I made some [costume] cover[s] with [a] full, long skirt and what have you ... and it would not sell. You find the skimpiest one will sell because the children of today they speak. I am not saying that we as the elder ones cannot change it, but we all maybe have to come together and say “Listen, we not making that, we not doing that, it is our culture, they must play anyhow,” but I think that is pushing something down their throat. You know, so we go with what we have, we accept what we have and that is what it is now, you know.

Despite Martin's desire to preserve styles he deems indicative of Trinidadian culture, he also respects the fact that times have changed. Likewise, other participants understand that the voice of the younger generation must be respected because they are "taking the reins" from the older generations and directing the progress of Carnival. As a result, bands that cater to the needs of older generation masqueraders are few and far between, as Evette explains,

E: ...it's young people taking over, it's about the nakedness, it's about the skimpy stuff and so now, for the older people, you have to find those bands that cater to people who are not comfortable being so exposed.

Kevin, Susan, and Wayne, all costume providers, offer another perspective on this high demand for the body revealing costumes. They attribute this new taste in costumes to the cultural focus on health and fitness, and explain that that the younger generations want the bikini-style costumes because they can wear them well. They state that they have given up trying to go against the popular trend of "less is more," but not without making for some disappointed customers. In the following exchange they explain the current state of the costume market,

I: So what do you think contributed to the shift [in styles]?

K: The generations, the Younger Generations, they don't want clothes, they want to show off their body and the less they have on is the better for them.

I: So you would say the generation prior were not as body conscious?

S: We didn't have...I made this comment the other day...the bodies that these young people have, we didn't have anybody in our days that had bodies like that. The way they pumping the chickens with steroids and thing, I don't know what they giving the young people now. They have bodies that we did not have in our days. You ever see in your days young girls with bodies like any you does see today [addressing her husband]? No! I would play, but fully clothed, but I never

wanted anything too heavy, too hot, or too cumbersome. So I understand them wanting to play Greek, but I never had the body to play in Greek clothes.

K: The long time people like to cover up, but the young people now they don't care.

S: But they have fantastic figures and they could afford to flaunt them. If I had a figure so I would of like to flaunt it too, but we did not have [such] figures.

Participants agreed that the younger generations today are more body conscious and therefore want costumes that highlight this focus (see Figure 19). Almost every masquerader, including Olivia, admitted to making diet and fitness changes to look better in their costumes:

O: I play tennis, lawn tennis, volleyball, and netball. So I make sure I had everything in shape before I came. I also did a cleanser to get my stomach very flat. I did a detox for seven days, and it was very good. Then I came here and eat all the roti and doubles and bake and shark we could eat, it was real good. So the first day of Carnival you drop some weight and hopefully I could lose the rest. Oh yes, it was a lot of preparation I did to come.

Some participants, especially the males, added that they went to a gym up to three times a week to get their bodies "costume-ready."



Figure 19: Masqueraders wearing costumes that highlight their toned bodies.

Young masqueraders want “sexy” costumes and the costume providers want their costumes to sell. Combined, the two make for pretty mas as it is today, as well as happy masqueraders. As Evette explains,

E: I guess skimpy is sexy and sexy sells...because even the biggest person out there wants to look sexy on Carnival day. And I guess in their own way, it's all

about making people happy, for the three days of the year when you could do anything and just be happy, so I guess it's just to make people happy.

The Masquerade Band

Participants highlighted the importance of the connection between the masquerader and the masquerade band. Costume providers have developed strategies to ensure that they attract enough masqueraders to compensate for the cost of doing business. Masqueraders, on the other hand, have certain criteria they go by when deciding on a band. As Kerry describes in her journal, the decision-making process involves not just participating in Carnival, but selecting the band. She writes,

K: I decided since last year when I played, and I made up my mind at the band launching. My friends wanted to play with another band, but since it was only my second year with this one, I kind of convinced them to stick to it. The budget for me, or rather the cost of the costume, didn't really matter, my thinking is that if I want it and it costs a certain amount, I just have to pay for it. The band I played with is very popular (Caribbean People) so that was definitely a factor in choosing this band. In my opinion (and I heard other persons express a similar view) Caribbean People had one of, if not the best costume presentations for 2010. When I saw the costumes at the band launch, I had to change my mind about four times before I decided on a section.

While Kerry considers multiple factors, the popularity of the band was a key factor in her choice of band. Many participants explained that a band's newness and popularity are primary factors for choosing a mas band. Martin, a mas band owner, uses the analogy of a recently opened dance club to explain how a band's marketing strategies target those who desire to be perceived as part of the "in" crowd.

M: ...If you open a club and people hear about it, the first few weeks, the first few months, the first few years everybody [is] flocking [to] it and as soon as they get

used to it and another club opens, they think they should be there. Um, Trinidadians [are] funny too. If you opening a club and you don't want certain people to come into it, it will be full. Why? I want to prove to my friend, "Eh, you ain't go there boy, you cyah [can't] get in there, well I was there last night," because I want to boast and brag that I was there. So the friend now, not thinking if he had stay in the old club he would not have to spend so much, but he trying to impress him too, well if he was there I was there too. That's how it is, that's the trend in Trinidad with these things, but then again certain bands will come and certain bands will be the latest crave.

Martin continues by explaining the business strategy of the popular bands.

M: So everybody will flock to it, and what they do is they raise they price real high. Why? They think they will get certain elements, and they wouldn't get [others]. They will want to choose their people. So what they do now, is they raise they price real high, to eliminate [the unwanted]. But they get away with it, you understand what I am saying? But it's good too because what happens is I want to prove to my friend too that I have that kind of money to spend. So if I, if I play mas with Sean Derrick, [they say] "Oh gosh you playing with Sean Derrick? I playing with Diamond." But Sean Derrick costume is plenty better, longer lasting and you will have a better time. [But] because Sean Derrick may not have Brian Lara (World renowned Trinidadian record holder in Cricket) playing there, or whatever playing there [his band is not the popular craze]...you know what I mean, they want to dance next to the "Joneses."

Martin highlights the considerations participants acknowledged in their approach to choosing a band. The band that has captured the attention of the masqueraders by marketing itself as the "latest craze" has a much easier time procuring business, and in turn, being selective about the masqueraders they bring into their band. Controlling participation through such strategies contributes to creating a buzz, and appeals to the social needs of those masqueraders who were "fortunate" enough to get a costume for that band.

Like Kerry, other participants acknowledged the importance of the costume as a factor for choosing a band. Costume providers detailed their approaches to providing costumes with unique offerings, always with the hope of securing the interests of masqueraders. Factors cited by providers are price, quality, aesthetic appeal, and uniqueness. For example, Kevin explains that his masquerade band uses price as a competitive advantage to keep a loyal customer base. He believes that his band is an alternative to the “latest crave” and expensive bands that appeal to the younger markets.

I: So what would be the age group of your masqueraders?

K: Our section age group is about 35, 30 to 35 average, this band is more a mature band. It's not like the Diamonds and the Thriller and Caribbean People, where all the money people and the younger people could afford to play with them.

I: Cost of costumes?

K: The costumes in our section is nineteen ninety-five (1995TT/335USD) for the women, and the men is seventeen-fifty [1750TT/294USD], they also have a frontline which is three thousand five [583US], and we also have individuals [masqueraders who lead the band wearing more elaborate costumes] which is five thousand. We have two individuals [and] ten frontlines.

Jennifer, a masquerader who played with Kevin's band, confirms the success of his band's pricing strategy. She journals,

J: I decided to play mas in November 2009. Definitely [on] a budget and I played with the same band last year after a three year hiatus. Their prices are more affordable than the larger bands. I play mas by myself. I don't play with the most popular band because I cannot afford the 'most popular' price (lol) [laugh out loud]. I play with a band who is affordable, whose costume I like.

Aside from price, others focus on the aesthetics, and especially a costume that is “very pretty” (see Figure 20). Lewis, whose band's (Rainbow) goal was to be an alternative to the most popular band, (Thriller), explains,

L: We wanted to give the masquerader a product that literally you would feel more like uh pretty, prettiness, and the band leader love a lot of bling and it is not going to change that much to be honest because she love to see costumes blinging in the sun. And at the end of the day, Carnival is about color, and literally [Rainbow] is synonymous with that type of product. We love our stuff to be like that.

He continues,

L: If you look at the costumes it would seem like you [are] wearing jewelry on the road, and for that we want to make sure our products that we put out are second to none. And I think this year the masqueraders...they felt like we give more in terms of the product and quality and people voted us as having nice costumes last year. And this year they actually give us the # 1 ranking in that department.

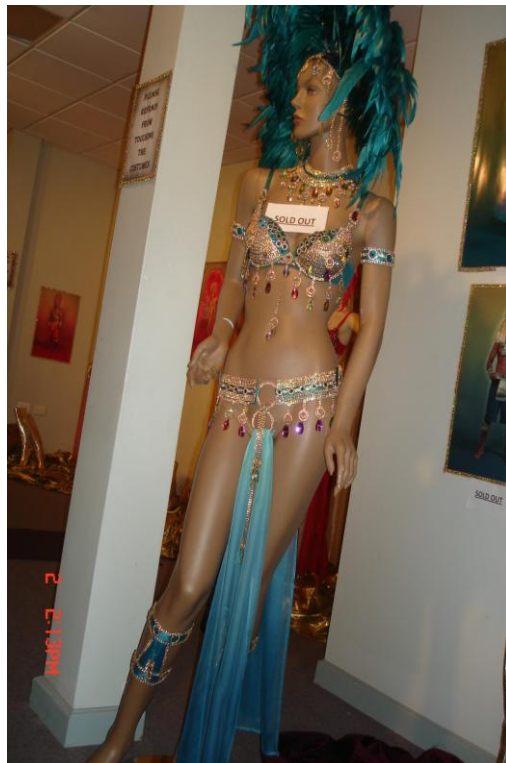


Figure 20: Costume that “looks like jewelry on the road”.

Customer satisfaction with Rainbow's aesthetics was affirmed by Olivia, who played with the band: "I chose Rainbow, the service was ok and I love my costume, I love my costume."

It is not only important that the costume be pretty, it must also be unique. Participants understand the intense competitiveness of the market and the need for bands to offer something different. Evette, a production manager, explains how her band's headpieces are unique from other bands because they come with earrings attached, thereby saving the masquerader some money on accessories (see Figure 21). She states,

E: Some headpieces in the other bands will cut right there [over the ear] and you then wear your earrings, but with [our] headpiece especially, that [the earring] comes as part of it. Each costume has its own set of earrings, depending on the beads that are used on the costume.



Figure 21: Dangling beads on head piece make for earrings when worn.

Lewis, also a production manager, has found that male masqueraders are not as satisfied as women are with the costume options available to them. He explained, “This is [an] area that we recognize that people [males] talk about, a pants and a top.” By listening to masquerader feedback, his band decided to be unique by focusing more on the design of the male costume. He explains their approach to giving the male masqueraders more costume options.

L: Mumbai [costume section] which is India, if you look at it you would see the effect of the guy with the half of mask in it, so even guys and all commended us for paying attention to the guys’ costume. Again our challenge was that we want to make sure that guy’s costumes look of a high quality and we got kudos for that as well. So this is all the different things that I told you about when I talked about us having “The Best Recipe” [their slogan]. It is about fixing these little things that people talk about and ... that is what makes Rainbow so different.

With this excerpt, Lewis echoes a major issue highlighted by the male participants: dissatisfaction with the costume offerings for men. Paul, who played with Lewis’ band, notes, “Well generally I am never satisfied...when I pay my money, [and] the costume that they give me, so I decide to do my own thing and paint.” Paul explains that he combines body paint with the costume in order to achieve his own unique appearance goals. So while Lewis’ band may have improved on their costume offerings for males, it appears that some male masqueraders are still doing their “own thing” in order to be satisfied with their costumes (see Figure 22).



Figure 22: Masqueraders who added body paint to enhance their costumes.

But there are also issues that surface in regards to female costumes. Addressing the unique needs of female masqueraders is particularly difficult when it comes to body measurements. One of the main issues costume providers raise is bra size, which is the most common challenge with the “bikini, beads, and feathers” style costume. Lewis explains,

L: You are going to have issues and that comes from basically bra sizes with women. Sometimes, to be honest, they [women] don’t always tell the truth. And another thing, I realize [is that] women don’t know their correct bra sizes, so sometimes they wearing the wrong bra[s] for years. I have seen these things on TV, on Oprah, and even on Tyra Banks show, and a lot of women don’t even

realize [the error]. It's all part of this process, hence the reason we have a policy, it's not overly strict, but we prefer if people try on our sample bras. Based on my experience I could tell women their cup size. Based on experience over the years, I could basically tell sometimes when a girl says "I am a 36 or a 32," I say "No you look more like a 34B or a 36A or somewhere around there." I usually am right because sometimes they don't know their correct bra size. So I help out, we help out people. It helps, and then sometimes people lose weight or gain [it], and sometimes people are not honest. So what they do in turn is turn it back on the band, not just Rainbow, but I am talking about all the bands have these problems where they [women] say, "Don't worry I could fit in it, because I want more cleavage," and when they actually get the bra, they get scared and they say "This is not what I ordered." But it's there, and you have to sign on the dotted line, and we have our disclaimer that what you try on is what it is you said you [wanted] and you had the opportunity to do so. So the onus is not on us then, but we are a band that is here to try and please, so if we have extras we may be able, after we sort out everybody else, and if there is a different size we may be able to assist [the female], and that is what we try to do as much as possible. We make sure that process is taken care of, and again, even though you may not be truthful or let's say there was a little mistake, because these things could happen in manufacturing also, [because] sometimes we don't have the total control over our suppliers at times, they do make mistakes.

Lewis illustrates how something simple like a masquerader's bra size can create a trickledown effect that results in serious customer service issues, in that, regardless of the beauty of a band's costume, poor service and lack of organization may keep it from attracting masqueraders.

Although the costume details were important, the most frequently cited reason for selecting a mas band was actually that of family and friends. As Zola writes,

Z: I play mas every year, so it's a given (please God) that I will be participating the following year. I play mas with Thriller every year, as do my sister and friends, so there is no real decision making process in this area.

Here Zola explains that the fact that her family and friends play with Thriller makes her choice of band a given. The importance of experiencing Carnival with loved ones is

validated by Vicky, who wrote: “This year wasn’t as good as last year. I think it was a combination of the music and the lack of some of my friends who I usually play mas with.” Thus, while costume providers can control some of the factors that attract masqueraders to their band, they are not able to control others.

Revolving Styles, Changing Meanings

The form of the present day Carnival costume, “bikini, beads, and feathers,” has diverged notably from past styles. Participants of various generations shared similar opinions as to the reason for the changes. Many proffered that because young people are the main consumers at Carnival, they are the driving force behind the look of the costumes. Ironically, some of the critics of the “bikini, beads, and feathers” costume form also criticize Carnival’s biggest proponent of the traditional costume, Brian Mac Farlane, because they believe that he is just a copy-cat of his teacher, Peter Minshall. Regardless, participants, and especially those involved in the business aspects of Carnival, commonly contrasted the mas of today with that of the past. As Martin, a veteran of all things Carnival recalls:

M: I remember back in the day, because you did not have the plumage and thing before, what you had was um the flambé and pitch oil pan around yuh neck, and you beating it, [and] yuh dustbin cover, and this type of stuff...And you have guys without clothes with the mud and the oil and whatever, and they have the little tail playing the jab jab [a pretty devil costume] with a little thongs on, because they used to use the bag, the crocus bag, the onion bag and stuff, with a little conchs tie up on they bottom and they have they little tail and they, “ooo, ley, ley, jab, jab,” (singing like a Jab Jab)...with a little posy on they head with two goat horn, [from] goat they kill for Christmas and keep the horn...and they naked eh with no clothes on, but they paint up and whatever. We had that before,

now, it is something else different. So it was good then, it was good now, and it will be still good in time to come, you understand what I am saying.

Martin's explanation illustrates how traditional mas was about being creative and using whatever materials you could find to make a costume. Notably, he describes the example of the "Jab Jab" (a devil), a costume that required the masquerader to be covered in oil, carry a stuffed bag (usually those used to package vegetables like the crocus or onion bag), wear goat horns to mimic devil horns, and blow conchs shells to make the "Jab Jab" sounds (Figure 23).



Figure 23: Traditional "Jab Jab" costume.

Evette explains that changing tastes have resulted in changing styles, and recalls that in the days of her father (who was a prominent wire bender), mas styles were simpler, but there was more preparation required for the performance. She explains,

E: The Minshalls [masquerade followers of Peter Minshall] will powder down themselves and they come out with their guitars, and they practice the whole month long, and they sing a melody, and you don't see those things as much anymore. And now they have pretty mas, and it's ok, because we evolving...our ideas are evolving. [It is] the computer age and everybody into this sexy thing, everybody want to look sexy, and that's not a problem, you know, because at least you still getting, at the end of the day, you still seeing ideas and still seeing ingenuity.

Evette believes that the changes to masquerade costume resulted from increased access to new ideas and advancements in technology. She believes that regardless of the dominant style, at Carnival time, costumes will continue to reflect the creativity of the Trinidadian people.

In contrast to Evette, Father Charles, a Catholic Priest, offered an alternate explanation for the changes in Carnival aesthetics. He begins,

FC: ...what Carnival has become now is a, what should I say, a Broadway show rather than a real, you know, what it was. People say evolution...It is an opportunity for people, nevertheless, to explore themselves and to show themselves or to free up themselves.

Father Charles explains that some Christians believe that this present day focus on "freeing up" is "inspired by the devil." He disagrees with this notion and points to economic reasons as the impetus behind the change. He references a book, "Capitalism

and Slavery,” written by one of the most popular Prime Ministers of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. Eric Williams. As Father Charles explains,

FC: (Dr.) Eric Williams’ major breakthrough in research [is] that many people had the opinion that slavery was abolished because of the humanitarian and noble ideals of those Europeans who fought for the abolition of slavery. But Eric Williams’ theory was it was capitalism, and slavery was no longer economically profitable. So you see the demise of Carnival has nothing to do with the devil, or whatever it is, but the power that be and who control the economics of the world and the flow of cash, and who get profits and who makes money. “What is happening with Carnival?” People are saying, “We [are] not seeing the shows again on TV?” Why? Because they [are] selling all the rights. [Before] anybody could come to Carnival, make a video, and they will go show it and make money selling it.

Father Charles’ explanation is similar to many of the participants’ views on Carnival as a money-making venture. The interviews reveal that participants who are in the business of Carnival want to have a profitable business, please their customer, and make enough money to live a comfortable life. Such motivations are in stark contrast to past times when Carnival was not about making money, but instead it was about making a socio-political statement.

Some participants believe that the change to modern day costume styles reflects a change in attitudes among young people. Many of the older participants talked about not being able to understand their younger counterparts’ attitude and think that the younger generation does not understand the value of tradition. That is, that the younger masqueraders do not care about the traditional meanings of Carnival, but instead are more concerned with having fun. Lewis, a younger production manager admits,

L: To me I think [it] has advanced. If it was how it used to be long time, as I said I don't know the proper history and I probably need to start doing that, but it has changed. It has become more commercial, it is an extension of a party for me on the street. And people, as I said, we are a different band, if you want to call it a party band, that's ok, an all inclusive. You have your costume and that is what people really care about right now, the market [that] we have right now. There are different markets who prefer the history behind Carnival and want to have costumes that go with the theme.

Paul, a male masquerader puts it another way: "Well it is about having fun. If you look good, you look good. That [having fun] is the most important thing. So looking good is by the way." Although Carnival as experienced today by the younger generations is about having fun with friends, to do so requires a costume. In turn, costume styles have shifted to suit the tastes of these younger masqueraders.

At the same time, participants expressed concern over the eventual disappearance of traditional masquerade costumes, and a desire to preserve traditional forms of Carnival in general. They believe that traditional masquerade costumes and performances communicate the history of Trinidad, something they fear will soon be lost. For example, Rose, who believes that "Carnival is becoming too commercial," is concerned that the knowledge of these costumes and what they mean will eventually disappear.

R: I think it is losing popularity as generations who would generally participate in that aspect of Carnival [traditional] do get older and the skills of that aspect of Carnival are not passed on.

When asked to explain what she meant by skills, Rose went on to say,

R: There is the traditional skill of making a costume; the bigger costumes that will be worn by the King of the band and the Queen of the band. One of those is the wire bending where you shape and create a wire frame over which is stretched

cloths of different material, over which the sequins are applied and the glitter applied, that all has traditionally been done by hand. The skill of wire bending and the hand-crafting of costume-making is being lost. It's time consuming, labor intensive...so to make the return and the revenue on Carnival, you have to be economical about it.

As Michael elaborates, traditional masquerade told a story,

M: Old-fashioned Carnival has evolved. In those days, you played something...your costume was something....the designer's perception of an abstract thought....you got the feel in the design, in what you wore. As a child, I remember going to Carnival to see the historical mas....things from Greece and Rome....Ancient history most times. And then it went into modern history....But you got the feel of what it was.

Most participants of the older generation expressed sadness over the dying out of the traditional forms. For them, today's Carnival costume— “bikini, beads, and feathers”—is what everyone wants to wear, thereby leaving little chance of reverting to the styles of past times. Interestingly, while some of the older participants acknowledged that present day costumes and celebrations are not like when they were young, they hesitated to say that this was a bad thing. When asked how she felt about it, Halle responded,

H: It's kind of hard to say it's bad, you know, but at the same time you feel as if it has lost its vibe. But who am I to say it is not a good thing? Because you could find those bands that cater only to young people and when you see them they look out of place, but in the meantime there are also those bands where you could find costumes, like this (points to her costume, a full coverage costume) where you are not totally exposed, you know. So there is a little bit for everybody, it's really hard to say no or yes. If I was not thinking I would say, “Oh no, hell, it's all bad, it's going down the drain,” but not really, it's kind of like evolving, so it's not really bad. But I think it is really important for them to know what used to be. I

think everything is kind of cyclical, like fashion, because some of the styles I see today, I say “I have been there done that.” There might be a slight adjustment, you know. But even hairstyles, been there done that.

Halle highlights another idea expressed by some participants: that styles will always follow a cyclical pattern of change. When asked about the possibility of costume styles revolving back to traditional styles, Brian and Claire responded,

B: Just as everything...

C: I think [Carnival styles are evolving]. Yeah ‘cause I saw it [happening] last year, it’s [traditional styles] coming back. Because I would say that the push started a few years ago when Mac Farlane came out with his first band. That was, how long ago, (thinking) hmmm, could be 2005 or could be before that when Mac Farlane first came out. Minshall was just coming out of [Carnival], he had done the last one.... You know, but that idea came out, the idea of, you call it the push factor, where the band leader, he push his ideas out and people, he got a positive response and he won small band of the year.

B: Yeah he won his first year...

C: And the next year he came out again and he won again, you know. And then the other bands started realizing that “Wait, something is happening.” So that is what I am saying, a few years down the road, about the fourth or fifth time, I saw last year, as I said, the bands are there with their beads and their feathers, but then there are some sections [with] fully clothed costumes, you know...and a lot of them were like that. Thinking about it now, I did see a lot of those costumes, so there was a push factor

Brian and Claire explained that while “bikini, beads, and feathers” costumes are popular, over the past five years, with the presence of costumer Brian Mac Farlane, they have seen a “push” back to traditional styles. Like Halle, they believe that costume styles follow the cyclical nature of fashion trends, and so much like fashion, Carnival aesthetics will always change.

Some participants think that the modern can co-exist with the traditional. John, a costume provider, is one who believes that there is room for traditional costumes, provided masqueraders want them.

J: It is finding out what the customer wants, in recognition that there is space in the Carnival for both forms, [both] of the art forms, and not that one is better than [the] other...and one is mas and the other isn't. And that needs to be clear amongst the mas fraternity and to John [Q] Public. It's all about choice, and that is why you have so many bands because people have [a] choice [about] how much money they are prepared to spend.

Similarly, Helen thinks that both the modern and the traditional represent Carnival.

H: People will say there was more of an artistic element...in that they were trying to portray a whole theme...and they would say that now it is just bikini and beads and feathers, and they don't necessarily see the art in that and probably think it is the same thing every year...I see the beauty of the Carnival today, or the "pretty mas" of today, as it is called, it is vibrant...to me it is beautiful, but I would also hate for us to lose our roots, to lose the bands of the style of Carnival that came before as well. So I think it is very important for us to preserve our roots and the traditions within Carnival, so all of the fictional characters that are part of Carnival as well that are portrayed...I will hate for us to lose that and for it to *only* become bikini and beads.

Although participants expressed a desire to preserve the traditional forms of Carnival, it should be noted that most are not willing to dress themselves in the masquerade styles of the past. Shelly, who confessed to being more reserved in her costume, nevertheless found it difficult to imagine wearing a traditional costume, and particularly when she compared her own costume to that of her mother's from a few decades ago,

S: And I have seen pictures of her that looks nothing like what the costumes look like today....like a whole long-sleeved top and a long pants and a scepter....I did not get it....but I just imagined....gosh it is hot out there....what are you going to do... it's hot and you've got on all this cloth.

Indeed, the perceived discomfort of dancing and parading all day in full-length garments is often provided as a justification for the more minimalistic styles presently preferred.

As Michael explains,

M: [You] wore spandex as your main body and then you had all these accessories to your body....but not bathing suits....we wore pants and the ladies wore skirts. Now, everybody wants to show their body....people think [the old styles are] too hot.

Contradictory emotions expressed by the participants point to a tension between the new and the old represented by Carnival costume. Participants felt strongly about preserving the traditions and equated the loss of traditional costumes to a loss of Carnival authenticity. Yet most also admitted that they prefer to play mas in “bikinis, beads, and feathers,” rather than the more modest traditional costumes. There is still the hope that traditional costume styles will be revived with cyclical fashion changes, and thus the traditions of Carnival will live on. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this change will occur within changing times, and will most likely be a reflection of global changes, as the focus of Carnival has shifted from the politics of oppression to the economics of capitalism.

CHAPTER VI

INTERPRETING CARNIVAL: THE ECONOMICS OF EXPERIENCE

This chapter examines the economic implications of Carnival at both the macro- and micro-levels. According to the participants, economic considerations are important to how Carnival is marketed and celebrated. Traditionally, Carnival was about revolution, as it was an expressive movement of the people. Today the focus is on maximizing profits. Businesses now take a strategic approach to marketing Carnival to the benefit of the Trinidad economy. This approach, in turn, capitalizes on the unique talents of the Trinidadian people. Entrepreneurs involved in masquerade bands and costume creation often rely on Carnival as a source of income throughout the year. But participants also talked about the high cost of participating in Carnival and the importance of personal finance and budgeting for the Carnival season.

Four themes emerged which structure this chapter: (1) *More Cost, Less Cloth*, (2) *Sourcing: Carnival in a Box*, (3) *The Carnival Business is Serious Business*, and (4) *Internationalizing Carnival*. As will be discussed below, Carnival is being marketed globally, and participants believe that this approach benefits all involved, including masqueraders, businesses, workers, and the country of Trinidad.

More Cost, Less Cloth

The cost of costume production repeatedly surfaced in the responses of participants involved in the business of Carnival. Participants discussed the growing

challenges involved in producing the “bikini, beads, and feathers” style costume, and the costs associated with it. They point out that it is actually more difficult and more expensive to produce the modern costumes, even though they are comprised of very little cloth and are often criticized as being “too skimpy” to be worth the money.

As Aaron explains, traditional Carnival costumes were created by individuals, and people used any materials they could find to create them. As he recalls,

A: Well, my first recollections of Carnival was [that it was] an individual thing. Individuals make their own costumes, make their own masks, and it was very crude, but in fact, I remember having an uncle of mine who used to make mud masks, who would put the mud to set, and put layers of paper onto it, and shape it into whatever shape he wanted, put it in the sun to dry, and then lift off the masks. And...[the masks] almost like something you got out of a store by the time he is finished with it and painted everything on it. [He] then sells these little masks which you could tie onto your face with a band. He will make dragon mask, which is something very intricate, then he would have the costumes that they would boil and dye. And it was, as I say, a personal thing.

Evette corroborates Aaron’s account with her own recollection of traditional mas,

E: Because remember, many, many, years ago you used to come out painted in blue with a stick in they hand and that was Jab Jab and that was a big thing. And then the ladies will use their curtains, their old curtains and they will make their Dame Lorraine, and stuff their bomsee [buttocks] and that was mas.

Costume creation in the past was relatively inexpensive because the resources used were determined by what was readily accessible to the creator. Since neither materials nor costumes were ready-made, creative problem-solving was integral to the outcome. Martin explains,

M: Back in the day we used to cut a breadfruit tree and the milk from the breadfruit tree we try to capture that to stick, to make glue. Now you have glue guns and you have sophisticated things, you know, to make a costume. Or you get some flour and you put it on the fire and then you put a little water on it and you make flour paste, and then you use the chicken wire with gazad paper [old newspapers] and you try to create a little headpiece and that kind of stuff. Now you getting material, you could look at materials and you want to touch it because that material look so, so rich, you understand what I am saying?

In contrast, the “bikini, beads, and feathers” style of costume is a product of Trinidad Carnival’s focus on commercialization. Aaron explains, “It’s [costume creation] not done like that anymore, it has got very commercial, in fact, it’s a big money making venture putting out mas now.” Today’s styles are intricate, time intensive, and require meticulous attention to detail (see Figure 24). For these reasons, Martin would prefer that mas return to the simplicity of traditional cut and sew costumes,

M: Now if you look at the costumes they produce now, it’s rhinestones, appliqué, trimmings, you know, um and these things are very, very, very, expensive. I wish that people could say... “Well ok we going back to clothes.” It’s easier for me. I don’t have to work so hard in the night to stick things together. What I would do is get a factory and say “Sew this for me” and I would bring it here, and we would run a trimmings on it. But now you have to take a bath[ing] suit and you have sometimes...to take yuh time and stick all these rhinestones, some of them have diamantes, you know. One plume now...I remember back in the days you see somebody with a head piece with one plume on the side, now your costume have eight, and it is about \$70 for one and you have eight plumes. And that’s just the plume, you ain’t talking about the leatherette and the glue and the time, you ain’t talking about all that. So that the costume that you seeing now that some people may criticize thinking “Well oh it’s bikini and beads,” it’s much, much, more expensive and ah, a lot goes into it.



Figure 24: Decorated bikini and beads pretty mas costume.

Interestingly, costume providers explained that the more cloth a costume requires, the less time involved and costs associated with producing it. According to Lewis, the bikini, beads, and feathers costume production is not as easy as it may seem. As his

masquerade band aspires to be the best costume provider, his biggest concerns are the cost and the local talents' ability to produce the styles. He explains,

L: If we could get something done a little cheaper [by outsourcing], the reason for that [choosing that option] too sometimes is that some of the costumes are challenging for them and sometimes if they are not able to deliver by being handmade a certain way, then it is gonna change and then the consumer is going to be upset. So certain costumes that we find challenging, we get it from the supplier that had the materials in the first place and then we do it that way. And yes, [if] we can get some things a little cheaper [we do], and yes, we [are] in business, we have to survive at the end of the day.

It is clear that it is the masqueraders, and not the costumers, who determine the style of costumes for Carnival.

Sourcing: Carnival in a Box

The challenges involved in producing masquerade costumes and meeting the stylistic demands of consumers each Carnival season are similar among those participants who are costume providers. Trinidad's underdeveloped textile industry makes procuring the necessary materials difficult, and particularly in a market that is becoming saturated by increasing competition. Perspectives on access to materials varied slightly among the participants. On the one hand, Brian and Claire, a married couple specializing in the design and creation of King and Queen costumes, think that obtaining materials from local sources is not too difficult. Their ease of obtaining materials is most likely the result of having to produce just one large costume instead of thousands. The following conversation highlights their experiences accessing materials:

C: It's not hard, I don't think it is. No, it isn't. I mean a lot of them right now are outsourcing via New York and China and wherever else, and it's quite easy. You

go online and you click and you get what you want. You buy what you want in bulk. Apart from that, if you need to get stuff right here in Trinidad, Samaroos and Jimmy Aboud [fabric stores] they bring in a lot of stuff. [However] right now if you go in Jimmy Aboud we can't get fabric because it has been bought out for Carnival.

B: Well certain materials...

C: Yeah well certain materials like Spandex. Oh gosh and the metallic ones. So I don't think they have a problem sourcing materials, I don't think so at all.

The limited availability of certain materials in the months and weeks leading up to Carnival points to the impact that the masquerade band costume market has on local resources. Bands can be comprised of anywhere between one hundred and fifty (150) to more than five thousand (5000) masqueraders depending on whether they are small, medium, or large. That equates to a lot of fabric, beads, and feathers. In contrast to Brian and Claire, masquerade band managers like Kevin, Susan, and Wayne, each of whom manage a section of a larger band, think that accessing materials from local suppliers is a difficult process. As Kevin explains,

K: It's very, very hard to get resources in Trinidad. Right, we do a prototype in June, July last year. And when you come to buy the actual material they sell [it to] this person over here. Samaroo Ltd [materials provider], he bring down all the material and he also sell to the islands. So when you make a prototype here, you can't get the material that you want to finish it, so you have to substitute. Right now we can't even get feathers.

For mas band costumers, the lack of materials used in the prototype means having to make substitutions to original design specifications. This becomes a major issue because it changes the look of the costumes the masqueraders were shown at the band launch, and thus what they thought they were buying.

The competition for local resources is not a battle every costume provider is willing to engage in. For example, Lewis, production manager of a recently established masquerade band, refuses to depend on local suppliers to meet his band's needs and admits to outsourcing,

L: I am going to be straight and honest. We have sourced all our materials from a supplier overseas. Um, the reason for that is, um, when we started [the band - Rainbow], one thing people were impressed with last year, and this year, is our materials, [they are] like almost second to none.

Lewis' excerpt highlights another factor contributing to the increase in outsourcing: the desire for materials that are unique and of high quality. When asked whether one could get these materials locally, Lewis explained,

L: Um, you can't find [that quality] here in Trinidad. Uh, I don't know if I want to call names of suppliers, to me we have no real supplier in Trinidad that gives you different materials. If we go to buy from the only two supplier[s] that are here, we would look all the same.

Costume providers are therefore also sourcing to provide uniqueness to their costume offerings and to help distinguish them from the other "bikini, beads, and feathers" masquerade bands.

Evette, a production manager for a popular band, affirms Lewis' assertion, and adds that the cost of certain materials, such as feathers, is more expensive in Trinidad. She describes the process of sourcing materials for her band's costumes,

E: Most of the basic materials are from here, but for Trinidad Carnival especially, they like to shop away. They get a variety of stuff that are not accessible to the normal person on the street. That way it make[s] the section kinda

premium... You don't see this [shows an example] in Trinidad, you have to go to New York. I think they even order things over the net from Japan and China, like the beads, and the belts, and the chains, and stuff. We hardly get that down here, so we have to order the chains and stuff from China, and then I think it goes to NY, and then they go to NY and collect it. [Thus], most of their materials are from companies locally, but for the more intricate designs and the feathers, they shop outside because feathers are kinda expensive in Trinidad. One of these feathers here are like \$35 dollars, so if you [are] making a headpiece with seven feathers it will cost you quite a lot if you buy it down here.

In general, participants also expressed a lack of faith in local suppliers' abilities to meet their quantity demands. As Kevin explained,

K: There is a couple of them, but they not very, very, um, they don't stock many things, but when they [going to] stock [costume providers won't know]. [Material providers state] "We don't know when we getting it back" nah, "We don't know when we bringing it in," and all this sort of thing.

Indeed, not getting an assurance that the materials you need will be ordered or having a reliable timeline for delivery greatly impacts the ability of costume providers to effectively manage business operations and keep promises to customers.

Participants who were in the costume business all spoke of the new practice by some bands of outsourcing "costumes in a box." This practice involves outsourcing 100% of the costume production process to foreign markets. They explained that this business strategy was used because it was generally hassle-free and considerably reduced costs. As Brian explained,

B: Well [with] the pretty mas... what a lot of those band leaders [are] doing now is that they ordering stuff online where they buying stuff from China and New York and different parts of the world, where they buying the costumes and bringing them to Trinidad.

To clarify the extent to which the costume creation process was being outsourced, Brian was asked if the bands were still maintaining control of the creative design process. He responded with the following:

B: No, those particular companies don't do sketches anymore. They would actually take a picture of a masquerader, well a model in the costume, take a picture of it and that is what they put up in the mas camp... it coming as a finished product. The Chinese do it [or] whoever. Or they (China) could send it to Trinidad and show them, "This is what we [are] offering this year." And then they choose which one they want for their section this year or whatever, and they make their order. It works like that too. They go up, get a prototype and bring it back to Trinidad. So Carnival in Trinidad is actually all over the place now, you know. But it still have the people like Mac Farlane who [is] actually putting his heart into it and coming up with his own ideas and making the costumes and everything.

Brian's statement that "Carnival is all over the place," refers to the fact that the focus on profits has changed the nature of the Carnival business. Some will outsource the entire costume, while others just the materials, and the rare few, like Mac Farlane, continue to keep the whole process entirely domestic. Lewis admits that his band used a combination of outsourcing and local suppliers as a deliberate business strategy.

L: Some of our costumes, to be honest, was made overseas by suppliers and some was made in Trinidad. So we have the raw materials here and some we [outsource]. You know, but at the end of the day we are in business.

As Brian mentioned earlier, there are some costume providers who deliberately keep production local, however, these providers are few and far between, and are considered "old school." He and his wife Claire explain,

C: Now there are some of the mas camps that would still do it, [but] they would add to their own, so add some [extra materials] and make it my own, my original thing.

B: [They] do it down here, and they still have the certain [costumers].

C: Like Big Mike and thing, traditional old school stuff.

B: But, it have the new ones [costumers] that come out, they ain't going through that, they just want to buy it [already made] and bring down and give it to people.

Clearly, costume providers must focus on profitability, and sometimes at the expense of local craft tradition. When asked if she believed that outsourcing has implications for Trinidadian culture, Evette responded,

E: The only thing I think about it that takes away [from] the culture is when the big bands ship their costumes. They [are] kinda killing Carnival in a way, they make it a *Carnival in a box*, you know, they bringing in their costumes instead of they have people, well um the younger people coming out, because the older people will know about the skill, but if they not having the chance to teach the younger people then it [is] killing Carnival technically. But when they go to China and order these costumes, and they coming down in a box ... then that's killing the culture.

On the other hand, some, like Martin, believe that “culture” has a mind of its own.

M: Lemme tell yuh, culture is different, you can't go into it and see culture and tell yuhself yuh going in and you going and look for money, it wouldn't treat you nice. Cause I know that, um, multi-millionaires try to use culture for their own personal gain, and it mash them up....but you don't use culture, you go in to culture with the love to do something for culture, and if it turn back and start taking care of you, count your blessings.

Outsourcing materials and costumes is a strategy employed by all costume providers in this study. However, not every costume provider feels good about the extent to which outsourcing has become part of the masquerade business, and many believe that this cost-cutting strategy may have implications for Trinidad's job economy. Kevin even

goes so far as to suggest that some form of regulation is needed, “Band[s] like they make everything from China...which I [think] the government [is] supposed to stop because they taking away labor from the Trinidad people.” Clearly there is a tension between doing what is best for business and what is best for the country’s economy. Moreover, outsourcing and the costume production process illustrates how the significance of Carnival has shifted toward economics and away from some of its cultural roots.

The Carnival Business is Serious Business

According to the participants, the Carnival season is both productive and intense. The multifaceted nature of the celebration requires a lot of hard work and orchestrated effort to ensure that the events run smoothly. Father Charles explains that critics of Carnival argue that Trinidadians are stereotyped as partiers by the Carnival festivities, but cites a calypso from Gypsy, a prominent calypsonian, to describe how this stereotype is not a true assessment of all Trinidadian people.

FC: Gypsy had a great calypso, *Carnival Mentality*...Gypsy’s contention is that people say we have a Carnival mentality and the Carnival mentality is usually used to describe us in a negative way. But he says the Carnival mentality is a mentality of hard work, of creativity, of a whole set of things, and he tried to list a whole set of positive things about Carnival that really and truly we need to look at and explore. The fact that people spend twenty five hours a day working on costumes, and the fact that they are committed to a vision of something, even if it is just producing bikinis, or producing whatever it is, that sense of dedication to the band and the hard work involved. When people criticize Trinidadians as lazy and don’t want to work, you know he was able to show that if we have a Carnival mentality we are hard working people, we produce, we meet the deadlines.

Thus, the Carnival season is more than just partying, it is a reflection of the dedication and hard work of many people. It is also beneficial to the Trinidad job economy, as many paid workers and volunteers are needed to pull Carnival together.

Participants explained that the help of workers is critical to meeting their deadlines. Evette, a production manager, explained the open door hiring policy of her masquerade camp during the Carnival season. Anybody can walk in off the street and get paid to make costumes. She needs all the help she can get to meet the costume production demands, and people can learn, provided they have patience. Thus, from her standpoint the Carnival business is a positive contributor to Trinidad's economy,

E: I think it is [beneficial], not only my working in the mas camp, but overall it adds a great employment for the country, a booster for the country. Because we have vendors, we have people to clean the street after the mas, we have a, we have a lot of different things and a lot of different avenues of employment just created by Carnival.

Some costumers depend on the masquerade business for income year-round, while others do it seasonally. Kevin's team members have regular jobs, and so do the masquerade business for supplemental income, while Lewis and Martin are committed to the masquerade business full-time. Such decisions are based on the scope of one's role at Carnival. For example, Kevin's team only manages a section in a large band, which lessens their overall responsibility where the band is concern. However, Lewis and Martin are part of a small management team for an entire band with multiple sections, which requires year-round management to keep the band successful.

Each masquerade band has a committee of volunteers who help make everything possible. The committee is a group of people who are typically friends of the management team and who assist the band before and during Carnival to ensure everything runs smoothly. Lewis explains,

L: Basically the execs draws out what we are about and we have different projects that we can include them [in]. There are different parts of the committee, you have more the planning committee, and you have the administrative part of the committee, and then you have those committee members who may not be around to help all the time, but then they will bring their friends. So you have them more on the sales team part of things. So it [is] split in[to] different areas, but primarily like foot soldiers more or less...but I don't want to call them that because they are very important to us, because they are also friends to us, they became friends from when they started ... last year, which was our first year, and we have grown.

The assistance provided by these committee members is integral to relieving some of the operational duties of the management team, who work around the clock to get the job done. Lewis expands on the demands involved in running a band,

L: I had to refuse a lot of potential work because of this band [Rainbow], and this band is very important because you want to deliver on all your promises for the masqueraders. And it is a very small group of us around the table that actually run Rainbow. Yes you have your committee, but you cannot depend wholly and solely on them because they are doing this more primarily on a voluntary basis. And the team, the small executive [team], it is about seven of us, so we work overnight, you know, everyday basically going to bed about 2 or 2:30 in the morning, getting up to come run the showroom from 12-8 [pm], and we just repeat the whole process over and over. In some instances we go to bed even later. So it is a lot of sacrifice, but we are passionate about what we do, so we kind of enjoy the work. I'll be honest with you, it is hard at times; I think [this time investment] is one of the most challenging things to me in this business.

Amidst the stresses of planning, participants also have to hope that they will do enough business to support their operations. Because many masqueraders pay the

balance on their costume just days before Carnival, costume providers are forced to make estimations about demand based on previous years and current economic conditions. As Kevin explains,

K: It is a stressful business, cause you put out the money and you not sure people [are] coming to play with you. It's a gamble, it's a gamble...you can't pull people into your band, it's [playing mas] not something you have to do. Like you might play this year, you had a good time, you had a ball, you go and get pregnant [so] you can't play next year. [Or] someone just lost their job. It's a give and take. One year you might be good, one year you might be bad, it's a gamble, as they say, "Life is a gamble," eh. You could walk out here and a motorcycle bounce you down and that's it. Look at people in Haiti, they gone to work...they ain't expecting the building to fall down.

Despite the unpredictability of masquerade costume demand, costume providers described using service-driven strategies to attract masqueraders, and particularly paying close attention to masqueraders' needs and managing their expectations. For example, Kevin and his team have a "Section Launch" where they invite masqueraders from previous years to view the costume offerings while enjoying free drinks and food. The relatively small size of his section, approximately three hundred masqueraders, allows his team to provide such personalized service. At the launch, they get contact information from the masqueraders to get feedback about costume offerings. Kevin explains, "Some people give back good comments, some people write back negative comments, you can't please everybody. So we have to work on the negative part of it."

Getting feedback from masqueraders is necessary to be successful in the costume business. However, implementing changes based on the feedback can be a challenge. Lewis explains that while his band tries to do what it can, it is difficult to meet every

masquerader's demands, and especially when you are a new band still learning the business.

L: There are times when people will say we could have done this better, we could communicate this differently or faster. As again, we are a band that's growing, this is our second year. I think we do a very, very good job, for [there are] other bands who have been out there for five and six years and still have these issues. I think we will just try to correct as we go along, as we go along the tree is going to have other branches, we realize we are going to get a little bigger. [However], we are not going to be that big because our goal is to stay small and intimate. So therefore we could have control and we could always execute quality and service at all times, because when you get bigger, it really get[s] watered down and you can't really...manage. But the type of service, the one-on-one experience, that family sort of atmosphere that we want to create at Rainbow, that feeling people used to have who played mas years ago, used to be like, "Yeah we make friends on the road and this and that." ... We want to maintain that by keeping the numbers manageable.

For Lewis, restricting the size of the band is a strategy that controls costs and helps the company to effectively manage operations while addressing masqueraders' desires.

Costume production must begin after the band launch in order to meet the Carnival deadline. Costume providers described the almost insurmountable costs and effort required to have a competitive masquerade band. Although capital is required to begin costume production, ongoing management of finances is also required. As Lewis points out,

L: ...People don't realize that there is a very small space for profit margin in doing a Carnival band, it is very expensive. It costs a couple million[s] to bring out a band in the first place. Last year we had losses, we did not get our numbers we were aiming at, and some got way less than that, but at the end of the day that is not the consumers' issue. They know that [we] have to deliver everything as we promise. So you have to gather that loss. People have a wonderful street party and they go home, you know what I mean, but you have to pay the bill[s] regardless.

Kevin explains how his team's strategy makes sure they have the capital necessary for starting the next production cycle,

K: What we do, after we balance everything for this year, we leave back X amount of dollars so we would not have to put out for next year. So the money in the account [is] getting a little interest, be it a two percent, three percent interest. So you have the money there so when time comes to buy materials, the money is there...So we have money to turn over for the following year. So whatever money we put out from the starting, we got back all that already over the five years and use up again.

Masquerade is not only costly for the band, but also for the masquerader.

Participants who played mas explained a need to manage their finances. Stephanie and Andrew both described their budget strategies in their journals.

S: I definitely have a budget as Carnival comes so quickly after the Christmas season where much expenditure is expected. In terms of a reasonable budget, anything above \$2400 [600US] would be too much for me to put out so anything close to or under that is workable. I made sure that I put that money away and that I was also able to cover my regular monthly expenses, savings and investments.

A: I started to budget and save for my costume every month so it was easier on my pocket and I am presently doing the same for Carnival 2011. I try to save \$20.00 [3.33US] per day for Carnival.

In regards to the likelihood of playing mas next year, each wrote:

S: It [Carnival 2010] was generally good, but I am ready to try something different next year as I am a little bored of playing mas on Carnival Monday and Tuesday.

A: Yes I would, but I am also looking at doing other things, like travel or so.

Therefore, bands must deal with changes in consumers' individual financial situations and their decision-making. Although they may enjoy playing mas one year, like Stephanie and Andrew, they may look for something else to spend the money on the next year.

Participants discussed how finding sponsors can help defray some of their operational costs. The intensely competitive nature of the business environment has transformed the nature of masquerade. Bands have moved to an "all inclusive" business strategy, where payment for a costume also provides free drinks, food, and promotional products such as sun block. Costume providers explain that these "extras" are necessary to be competitive and attract more masqueraders. However, differentiation translates into increased costs, some of which could be alleviated with help from sponsors.

L: By giving them [the masqueraders] that extra we like to make people feel like they digging out Rainbow eye basically. Even with the gift bags, we want to make sure they leave here and it [is] heavy, it must have some value in there. And the thing is not difficult if you could get sponsors to give you stuff and you just pack the bag and let people be happy.

As Lewis describes, giving more for less is part of shaping the perception that a band really cares about its customers. However, companies that are willing to provide sponsorship are very selective about the masquerade bands they choose to associate their brand with. As Lewis goes on to explain, sponsors often require evidence of a successful business before they commit.

L: This is our second year, it is about recovery and it is about survival, and when we could be in that position where we could have no more losses, now you could have more sponsors coming on board, because now your product is speaking for

itself. Because this is a process, and people don't realize...people have started up before and never survived beyond the first year. The business community don't rush in to you and give you X amount of dollars [because] you say you have this plan. It's a process, again they want to make sure that they [are] going to associate their product with quality and the fact [is] that [if] this going to fold up next year...and we give you all this...so sponsors don't come in. This year, God bless, we have had more people on board, but yet still in a very sort of conservative way.

Ultimately, building a good band reputation is critical to procuring the support from sponsors necessary to stay competitive.

Costume providers point out that the idea that profit is the sum of the price of the costume multiplied by the size of the band is misguided. As Martin explains in the following excerpt, there are many hidden costs involved in operating a successful band:

M: Some people see a thousand dollars for a costume and all they do is say "Well ok, a thousand dollars for a costume" and they say "But wait now, this person sell a thousand costume, he's a millionaire." That's the perception. But it's a lot that goes into it. There is some hidden cost that the same person who add it up like that don't see because, um to break it down for you...if a costume is, let's say two thousand dollars and uh, you have let's say two thousand, uh we just calling figures, you will know what the figure is if you add it. But then what about if you thinking about um, you might look for a nice place in Woodbrook because you wanna be in a nice area kinda thing. That place [is] not yours, [so] you have to pay a rent. That, and yuh T&TEC [Trinidad and Tobago Electrical Company] light bill, yuh telephone bill, alright, water rate, taxes, labor. You know um, you have that then you have materials, you have to purchase the materials. Apart from purchasing the materials you have the infrastructure, the infrastructure is the toilet, the food, the drinks, the music, the security, you know. One band, a brass band may cost you, if you don't have one hundred (100) and up thousand dollars you can't hire a brass [band]. You know, so, so you talking about if you have two brass, is um, is, is, if you have two brass you talking about 250,000 [41,667US] dollars. You know, a d-jay might give you less...50,000 [8333US] dollars and you have sometimes four music trucks or five music trucks as the case may be. You know, and then, the whole infrastructure you have to go into it. So sometimes the money goes like this...that's how it works. As I was saying, um there is some band leaders who made a lot of money, some band leaders who lose a lot of money, you know and some band leaders who sustain, don't make a big

killing but making an honest living and um, um, [are] satisfied with what they have that kinda thing, you know, yeah man.

Carnival is clearly a difficult business to be in. Participants describe having to do what it takes to survive and to succeed, yet feel sympathy for those who do not. As Lewis points out, “I will not knock anybody...as I said, when you [are] involved in the process then you will realize how difficult and how hard it is.”

Internationalizing Carnival

There was a general consensus among participants that Trinidad Carnival is unique because of the nature of its celebrations and the creative talents behind them. However, most participants acknowledge that Carnival is not as internationally popular as others, such as Rio’s Carnival, due to a lack of strategic international marketing efforts. For example, Martin, a masquerade band manager laments, “People think [their] Carnival is better than our Carnival, it’s not.” He believes that other Carnivals are just better at marketing the event and luring the tourists. Martin specifically addresses the success of the misleading marketing tactics that are used and argues that the pictures used to market Brazil’s Carnival are not representative of the festival. As he explains,

M: Sometimes in the magazine you see all the nakedness and that kind of stuff from Brazil with the totush [breast] outside...The camera people will go around to the different club area[s] and stuff and take these naked girls and put them [on the magazine], and say, “Oh gosh Brazil Carnival!” And men [are] basically gullible, they will watch totush and boobs and say, “What! [I’m] going [to] Brazil, boy!” But our Carnival is the best Carnival in the world...we don’t showcase it properly.

Other participants echoed similar concerns and think that Trinidadians, in general, are not aware that Carnival is not as globally popular as they think. Aaron, an executive for an entertainment company in Trinidad, asserts,

A: ...What I am saying, a lot of people still don't [know], we think that the world knows about it [Carnival] and we think we don't have to market, but we do, and we have a product which can be marketed and which can attract a lot of people.

Although the general consensus among participants was that Trinidad Carnival is not marketed enough, some see an important connection between marketing and economic development potential. Father Charles explains that Trinidad Carnival had been unofficially marketed "but we were not profiting financially." Those participants who might encourage the Carnival industry to improve marketing efforts recognized that they had to help make the change. For instance, Aaron admits that one of his corporation's main objectives is to globalize Carnival and create business partnerships with those who can contribute to its production and entertainment value. He explains that his company's involvement with the various cultural artists, including singers, dancers, and dramatists that create Carnival, can be used to position Carnival as a global "product." One such initiative involves using the internet to provide global access to these local artists.

A: ...So you would find that these very people play a significant role in Carnival. For example one of the initiatives we have in this company, which is a young one, is an e-registry of all of the entertainers in the country. So you will find that even a wire bender or a seamstress will be registered with us, because they play a very significant part in Carnival with the costuming.

Global access to dancers, singers, and wire benders means that business relationships can be forged as Trinidadians can help their global counterparts to develop Carnivals of their own.

The general consensus among the participants is that the Trinidadian government has yet to package and control the marketing of Carnival; therefore, foreign markets have been able to mimic or even misrepresent how Trinidad Carnival is celebrated. Copy-cat or hybrid Carnivals, as well as the more popular Carnivals as in Rio, compete directly with Trinidad's Carnival and ultimately threaten tourism. Aaron explains,

A: You see Brazil is an alternative, but Brazil is not really making an effort to export their Carnival, their Carnival is so big everybody comes to it, nobody wants to do a self style [Brazil] Carnival. But for some reason, because of our diasporic thing, a lot of Trinidad and Tobago [style] Carnivals have spawned throughout the world. [But] it's not the quality of a real Carnival, in terms of the costuming.

Martin, who participates in global Carnival festivals and has won many masquerade competitions, believes that Trinidad's talents in regard to costume creation and display are unparalleled. As he argues,

M: If we take the kiddies and we take all the individuals, right, ...all the Kings and Queens and ...and we take the best we have here and showcase it properly in a dome [stadium], in that same dome with Brazil we will blow them away.

The assertion is that Trinidad's Carnival can hold its own even against Brazil's Carnival. Martin goes on to make reference to one of the most popular costume artists, Peter Minshall, and cites his globally acclaimed work at the Barcelona and Atlanta Olympic opening ceremonies as evidence of Trinidad's talents. Compared to the other Carnivals,

Trinidadian costume artists and masqueraders put life into costumes without using floats or electric generators, and from Martin's perspective, establish the superiority of Trinidadian Carnival. Martin explains the talent by describing the enormous costumes, Tan Tan [Queen Costume] and Saga Boy [King Costume], that Minshall presented at the Olympics. These costumes displayed the affection between a man and woman. A male and female masquerader carried the costumes without floats, and brought each to life without the help of generators. As Martin explains,

M: ...That's why Minshall get contract outside to do Tan Tan and Saga Boy [King and Queen costumes], one of the biggest names. Imagine a man and woman kissing, and hugging up, and dancing, and it's not real, hee, hee, hee (laughs), with a man without any machine making it happen, or generator or whatever.

As a result of the global audience, people like Minshall have helped to market the value and uniqueness of Trinidadian Carnival.

Aaron believes that strategic marketing efforts would lead to other kinds of business opportunities, and to ensure authenticity in the copy-cat Carnivals. He believes that Trinidadians could consult with countries that are interested in developing a Trinidadian-style Carnival but do not have the talent or the knowhow.

A: ...We don't have to tell people come to Trinidad. We could virtually say "The Carnival can come to you." In internationalizing Carnival...let's take any new location in the United States that wants to, first to begin they don't even know how to organize a Carnival, right, there are people here who initially can help. It will be like a consultant telling them what are their needs, what you can put in place, establishing routes, establishing locations. Then when it comes to the music you want a combination of the indigenous music from the location married with what you can get from Trinidad and Tobago. You'll want to know the

current tunes [and] market [them] well before the event so that people can appreciate the music.

According to Aaron, each component of Trinidad Carnival is marketable. He explains that Trinidad's national instrument, the steel pan, has already been spread globally and is being taught in foreign markets. At Carnival, bands of pan men playing different types of steel pan compete for the Panorama titles and even accompany traditional bands on Carnival days. As he describes, Trinidadians are uniquely skilled to teach foreigners how to play the steel pan and build steelbands.

A: The steel pan...you are seeing research in a lot of parts of Europe, you see it in Japan, you see it in the United States, but how would I put together a thirty [30] piece steel band? How would I train individual players to play various instruments? How would I arrange a tune so they could actually play in concerts and events on the road [or] whatever? And same thing applies to the brass bands where the framing of our music is different, the melody, the way our music is structured with part time as opposed to the 4/4 time that America uses.

If the music that makes Trinidad Carnival unique can be shared globally, so can the costumes. As he further elaborates,

A: And then obviously when you come to the costuming, the actual fabrication, especially with the wire bending, the head pieces, the larger costumes, the Kings and Queens if you want to have, to get that flamboyant look, you need people who do this for a living. I see in Antigua, in St. Lucia, they import our people and put them in large warehouses and they make hundreds of mas costumes. They earn a living by going to some of the other islands in the Caribbean and I know for a fact that some people go to England to make costumes as well, [for] Labor Day Carnival, and [for] Miami [Carnival] as well.

Participants like Aaron and Martin think that the key is to build awareness of the uniqueness of Trinidad Carnival and to market its various strengths. On the other hand,

some participants, like Neil, appreciate attempts to internationalize Carnival, but caution that the over commercialization of Trinidad Carnival might actually threaten its uniqueness. He explains,

N: Yes we want to package it and sell it to Europe, but I think the reason why Europeans come here or other people come here is because they want to experience a culture different from their own. So it does not make sense trying to make it too European or whatever the case might be. When they come here, they don't want AC [air conditioning], they want straw hats. I am not saying that should be the costume or anything, I am just saying they want that island feeling.

Neil believes that the provisions made to lure foreigners and ensure that they are comfortable when they come to Trinidad for Carnival are not authentic representations of the island experience and what makes the Trinidadian experience particularly unique.

Currently, efforts are being made by the Trinidadian government and Carnival organizations to profit from the broadcasting of Carnival. One such effort charges a fee to anyone interested in recording and broadcasting Carnival events. Granting exclusive rights to foreign television stations to broadcast the Carnival celebrations will allow Carnival to reach broader markets. While this is an economic gain for Trinidad, it is a double-edge sword, in that the citizens are now charged a fee to view the Carnival festivities. Father Charles explains,

FC: Now...if you want to film Carnival and we catch you with a camera you have to pay, only people who paid their dues are allowed to film Carnival. So that you can now get Carnival on one of those US channels, those cable channels, but you have to pay...one of the US cable stations [has] exclusive rights.

The Internet is another marketing tool that is currently being explored, as it provides instantaneous reach to global markets. Aaron's company, a subsidiary of the government, is working on making Carnival celebrations accessible via the internet. He explains, "Through the use of the internet we already set a link to download music internationally, we [are] looking at live streaming of Carnival events, we [are] looking at podcasts, you name it." Ultimately, the use of modern day technology will make it easy for those in global markets to get a glimpse of Trinidad Carnival festivities and perhaps be interested enough to travel to Trinidad for Carnival the next year.

In summary, participants' experiences with managing and marketing Carnival provide perspective on the challenges involved in being in the Carnival business. Being successful sometimes occurs at the expense of the country's job economy through outsourcing, as profits gained limit employment opportunities for the country's people. Expansion of Carnival abroad is one way to ensure opportunities for economic gain beyond the country's own celebration, and for the locals to benefit from copy-cat Carnivals abroad. It is evident that marketing is taking on a global focus, however, some question the effect this may have on the way that locals experience Carnival. As Father Charles explains, "I think last year, one or two years, we had no Carnival on local TV." As with any kind of progress, focus in one area, decreases the attention paid to another. In the next chapter, participants' experiences are explored for the implications such progress may have for the social value of Carnival.

CHAPTER VII

INTERPRETING CARNIVAL: EXPERIENCES IN SOCIAL CONTEXT

Trinidad Carnival can be seen as a barometer of social change. In this chapter, themes reveal how Carnival represents what is important to Trinidad society, how beliefs and values have evolved, and the importance of Carnival to maintaining social order. Four specific themes surfaced to structure the chapter, including: (1) *Carnival as a Social Steam Valve*, (2) *The Stage*, (3) *The Value of Performing*, and (4) *Education and Carnival Past, Present, and Future*. As will be discussed below, participants believe that the Carnival experience is important for relieving the stresses of society. The season fosters solidarity when masqueraders become one under the cloak of similar costumes as they “jump” across the Stage. Because Carnival performances continue to shift further and further away from traditions, participants believe that finding creative ways to educate the youth is the only way to preserve the country’s unique heritage.

Carnival as Social Steam Valve

The positive benefits of Carnival for Trinidad society often surfaced in the interviews. There was a consistent belief expressed that Carnival is a time when people can de-stress, let go of life’s burdens and have fun with friends. Some participants added that this yearly event has contributed to the high levels of positive mental health found among Trinidadians when compared to citizens of neighboring islands. Father Charles explains,

FC: Like one time it was mentioned that the per capita, per capita, you know, there are, there are less mentally sick people than [Caribbean countries] smaller than Trinidad. Part of that is that we have the freedom of letting go steam, of getting even, in that kind of dramatic way at Carnival. So that lets off steam and it helps us to deal with some of the things that would send some people mad in other countries. You know, I mean, so that is a kind of human release that is a cathartic kind of experience that people just so frustrated in the end that they will spend thousands of dollars on Carnival for that emotional release. And what has become more important now is that cathartic experience. That letting go, that just abandon, because life is just a, so much pressure in life, so much tension that at least for this period of time you just let go and the money invested in that seems to be better spent than paying the psychiatrist, than paying for, you know, kind of relaxing medications or what you call it, suppressants of different types or the other. We get it out, we just drink it out, we fete it out, we dance it out, we get back to some semblance of sanity and order and after that we go back to [regular life]. So that for most people now, the important thing is not the costuming, it's not the story line, it's not the mas per se, but the revelry, the let go, the abandon and just dancing your body, dancing your frustrations away, dancing yourself to freedom. So that seems to be a big thing.

The steam-valve quality of Carnival was often tied to the scheduling of Carnival just before Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the Catholic forty day Lenten fast. Yet as Father Charles explained, while Carnival was inspired by the French Catholic presence in Trinidad during slavery, it is not a Catholic celebration. He explained that the scheduling of Carnival events around Lent, and then the cessation of them on Ash Wednesday, was because of the large number of Catholic citizens in Trinidad. He also noted that the French pre-Lenten celebrations were not necessarily a practice of the Catholic faith either.

FC: [The] Church as such was not into the Carnival planning or organizing, nor the pre-Lenten balls, Lent was the church's commitment. But people who were Catholic and were being led in the Lenten season for Easter, say, "Well before we go into this period of Lent, let us have our festival." And for many, many years or decades once Lent started there was no fete, once Ash Wednesday came Carnival

ended at midnight and there was no calypso, no steel band music, no Carnival activities.

Over time, the Carnival festivities have changed to reflect shifts in religious practices and social expectations. He goes on to explain,

FC: But the society has become broad, more broadminded, more inclusive to recognize, okay Lent is a Catholic thing. So while it is alright for Catholics to go into their Lenten thing, others carry on with their traditions and practices and Carnival almost extends a few days into Lent now. So Carnival really does not end at midnight Tuesday, there are shows and different events taking place. There's lots of things that go on, parties continue, people have a "post Carnival"...Ash Wednesday is a big fete [party] day too, you know that's the cool down, and that used to be a small family thing, but now it's a big social event, the Ash Wednesday cool down... Ash Wednesday has become even more lewd than the Carnival because it is dubbed the "Carnival cool down," so people even take off the little that they had [on].

Trinidadians clearly enjoy the release of the Carnival season, and as Father Charles points out, have extended their celebrations a few days after for a little extra. Participants who were masqueraders confirmed this desire to extend Carnival, and particularly when asked how they felt once the Carnival season was over. As Genelle laments in her journal,

G: As the lyrics of Shurwanye Winchester's song "Carnival Please Stay" says, "Carnival please stay, don't go away, for another day, I'm begging yuh." I really didn't want the experience to be over. I really had a great experience. Despite feeling now, like I need a holiday and my feet and body needs a massage, it was definitely worth it. I went from being a spectator last year, to being a masquerader this year and I must say that the two realms cannot be compared.

Dianne echoed this sentiment, writing,

D: This was my first Carnival experience! I have enjoyed all the festivities and I'm looking forward to attending next year! I just love the culture, the dancing, the music, food and the people! It just takes you away and makes you forget about all your problems at least for the moment! Everyone is so happy and free...no stress...no worries mon!

Additionally, Malcolm writes,

M: Well it goes without saying that I feel tired. I also feel a little depressed because it seemed to fly by so very quickly and now it's over and I have to wait a whole year again, plus next year's season will be longer so it will seem like waiting forever.

A reprieve from the stresses of daily life is often cited as one of the most appealing aspects of Carnival. Likewise, crime decreases considerably during Carnival days, and the participants who were masqueraders admitted to feeling very safe. Some believe it was due to meticulous planning and organization, while others cited the security provided by their band and particularly the exclusion of non-paying members. For example, Kerry felt safer because of improved band security and playing with a group of friends.

K: This year compared to last year, I think I felt safer since I played with much more people than last year. So I always had someone with me on the road and didn't have to worry about being separated from the group. The band security was much improved; the entire band was much more organized than last year so that was great!

Some participants think that because Carnival affords opportunities to make money, people are too busy to think about criminal activities. In addition, many of the offenders are actually involved in the entertainment aspect of Carnival. When asked if he

believes Carnival is beneficial because it contributes to a reduced crime rate, Aaron replied,

A: Of course it is and from that point of view I think that we do not recognize crime. For some reason crime drops at Carnival time significantly, the criminals want to play mas too, and a lot of the criminals are the ones who are playing pan....Some of the bagons [criminals] play pan and they love it, and if you wanted to reduce crime you will make it more available to them [throughout the year]. There are so many people involved in some aspect of Carnival, even if it is on the day you get to sell some sweet drinks, some soft drinks or whatever, it's a form of income and it gets you galvanized into preparation, you know, all the transportation, the goods, put it in, make some money, deposit it, do something with it.

Thus, the Carnival season is not just an economic boon but a social necessity for the majority of Trinidadian people. They are able to relieve stress for a few days by focusing on expressing themselves with no regrets among a community of like-minded individuals, which fosters a joint resolve to “free up” in a safe environment.

The Stage

The absence of the “Stage” at present day Carnival celebrations was a common issue discussed by the participants and intricately tied to the performance aspect of Carnival. The “Stage” was located in Trinidad’s Queen’s Park Savannah, and was the primary location for Carnival competitions, including the coveted “Band of the Year” title. The Stage functioned as the main judging point of the mas bands. Referred to as “The Grand Stand” area, patrons paid admission to experience the main Carnival competitions in the comfort of a seated stadium, instead of being a spectator on the street. The government demolished the Stage in 2006 with the promise to rebuild an updated version with improved facilities as part of its efforts to better commercialize Carnival.

The Stage was the place where Bands unfolded their theme in a masquerade performance. Although few bands perform like traditional times, masqueraders anticipated crossing the Stage because they were on show, elevated in front of a sea of onlookers who paid to see the beauty of each Band's costumes without the distraction of non-costumed spectators mingling in and around the band. Only masqueraders and paid spectators were allowed in the Grand Stand area. While on the road, the masqueraders can jump-up with their friends, however, when crossing a judging point they are required to get with their section so judges and spectators can see the beauty of each section's costumes as a cohesive whole. As Aaron explains, the Stage was not originally part of Carnival, but was created as a marketing strategy.

A: I would say more to commercialize, because you have to pay to come in. When you say you going to see mas when I was young, you just walk down the road and just see mas passing on the street, you could touch them, you know, you that close to them and that was the fun, you could jump, chip a little bit with a band to the corner and then run back to your parents, and the next band do the same thing again, and when it get dark you go home, but that was it.

Martin contends that the Stage was critical to the performing of Carnival, since it provided a focal point for framing Carnival. Now that it is gone, a key opportunity to market Carnival is also gone.

M: We take away the stage, that big beautiful stage that we used to have, and when you go there and you put yuh camera...anything go on that stage it look good, you know we sell that to the world. Now we can't send a tape outside because we don't have that capture, that captivity to sell.

Lewis has a very close past connection to the Stage, as his masquerade section was the last to cross the Stage the year it was demolished for renovations. He feels as if the experience was *déjà vous*, just like the name of the section. He explains,

L: As a matter of fact my section (in Poison), was the last section that cross the Savannah stage when the lights came on and they were sweeping the stage.....that was my section. It was so *déjà vous* and that was the name of my section. Then all the other sections came back on stage and they were taking their last jump on the wooden stage.

It should be noted that Lewis was adamant that this instance be included here, not just as a historical fact, but also because the experience meant so much to him.

The Stage was a source of concern for many of the participants, and those involved in the business side of Carnival expressed dismay over the government's lack of urgency in rebuilding it. Some expressed disapproval regarding the government's decision to instead build a Cultural Arts Center to host the Fifth Summit of the Americas, which brought prominent Heads of State, such as the newly elected U.S. President Obama and the Queen of England, to Trinidad. Aside from the government's decision to make the building of the Arts Center a priority over the promised Grand Stage, participants were even more upset that the Trinidadian people could not use the Cultural Center. Kevin stresses,

K: As I said the government do not...like one Carnival, you ain't see they break down the grand stand. They build a, what you call it again? The Arts Center, before they could build back the Carnival Stand. So they said they were going to build a new one for Carnival, that was about five years ago, that was six years ago. They build that [cultural arts center] before they could give the people of Trinidad and Tobago something that they could utilize. You can't utilize the Performing Arts [Center]...they had the summit [Fifth Summit of the Americas]

there, right....That ain't helping the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Panorama is one of the biggest things for Carnival, [but] you see a little, little stage they have to perform on.

Aaron thinks that the Stage will be rebuilt in approximately four years, and this delay is indicative of the government's prioritization of politics over business.

A: I think it's [the building of the stage] at least four years away. It can't be a priority. A priority was the Center because they were having some Royal Heads of Conference. But what's the priority for a Carnival Center, we have Carnival next year, we will have to wait in the meantime. So I do not think there is the will to finish that project as early as they should. To the fact, I think it should be built before the Performing Arts Center, it's more needed than the thing, from their point of view it [the Center] was more needed because they were having a Commonwealth Heads of Conference meeting for, what, a day? And then [it] just sitting down there looking good.

Thus, because Carnival is a taken-for-granted part of the fabric of Trinidad's society and occurs every year, Stage or not, the government has exhibited a lack of urgency about rebuilding the Stage.

The Value of Performing

Participants explained that putting on an outstanding performance is critical to win the "Band of the Year" award. As discussed earlier in this dissertation, traditional Carnival masquerade involved costumes as part of performing a character and providing a theatrical show for the viewing audience. Time and preparation ensured a more convincing performance so that the audience was able to accurately identify the character being played. Aaron describes how this commitment to performing a character has shifted today to be more about jumping and wining,

A: ...Ok let's take a guy who's playing a dragon, there was a special dragon dance and when he got on stage he had to show that dance before he moved on. A person playing a bat, a clown, or even a sailor, a sailor had a particular dance, he would have to do it. Now you have young people coming up and they not, they have not learned the dance they don't know it, but they playing sailor, they don't know what they're supposed to do to show people, I am a sailor and whatever I am representing. So there again you have the problem that the actual indigenous aspect of whatever you are portraying [is not being transferred]. The only person I think who has attempted to do that is Minshall, where when he presented his mas, there would be a whole theater production in terms of where he comes on stage and what people do. And then we see Mac Farlane has picked up where he has left off. But a lot of people come on stage and it's just a series of bodies going across the stage in bikinis and they could not care less whether they wining, they walking, they jumping, to them it's just having a good time. It's not a matter of "I am part of an overall presentation and supposed to do something special when I am seen on presentation" or "I go across the stage to be part of the overall theme of the band."

Aaron believes that the younger masqueraders have little concern about the "true" performance aspect which requires they communicate the theme of the band. On the whole, participants attribute this to the present day "bikini, beads, and feathers" trend which is synonymous with just ensuring that masqueraders have a "worry-free" and fun experience. But Lewis, a "bikini, beads, and feathers" costume provider, wants to change that perception by focusing on performing themes, and thus increase their chances of winning titles. He explains,

L: Our challenge however, as I told you before is to change the mindset that bikini and beads cannot compete. That is one goal that Rainbow has. This year we have a King and Queen of the band as well, and I think people might have to look up at us as a serious contender, we will not overthrow Mac Farlane, [usual winner] but I refuse to accept that a man will just win every year. You just have to make sure that you put the right effort and things in place and be a little bit creative in the process and you should be able to put up a challenge.

Lewis and his management team want to be differentiated from and defy the stereotypes of the generic “bikini, beads, and feathers” masquerade bands. He views all forms of costuming as art and believes that, provided there is the ambition, every band has the opportunity to compete to win. The reference to a King and Queen of the band points to the focus on competing for the Band of the Year title. Indeed, aside from the fact that everyone loves to win, there are certain benefits to the title. As Brian and Claire point out,

B: Well he [Brian Mac Farlane] definitely [is] going for the gold this year, the reason being because if he win[s] it this year it would be three consecutive years, which means he gets to keep the trophy. After winning it three times in a row you get to keep the trophy. If he loses, if he does not win it this year, he has to give up his trophy. So he [is] going for gold definitely this year, so he [is] coming out hard.

C: I think, the other band leaders are, they are, don't think they [are] not in the competition, because it's [bringing out a band] competition as well, it's a bonus if you win.

Martin, a masquerade band manager and winner of many past Band of the Year titles in Trinidad and international hybrid Carnivals, sees himself as one of the pioneers in the industry. In the following excerpt, Martin explains his recipe for winning. He states that his record of wins (eleven in the NY Brooklyn Labor Day Parade; twelve for Boston Carnival; three for Long Island Carnival; last year at Miami Carnival; and five consecutive years in Trinidad), are a result of his focus on performing instead of competing. He researches each theme to be able to understand the breadth of what he is trying to portray.

M: Well...you see I don't compete, what I do [is] I perform. We perform and if you think it is looking good enough then place us, but if I playing something I will unfold it for you at some point, whether it's in the front of the band or in the back of the band or the middle of the band. So I perform, so I have a band and I looking to unfold it for you and tell you, "Look, well, this is what we playing and this is what they do." So I unfold *Kingdom of the Dragon* for you, I unfold *Hiawatha* for you, I unfolded um ...*A Journey through Africa*, you know, I unfold these things. This year it's only fitting that if I play um Native American Indian, I play a *Journey through Africa* and I play *Kingdom of the Dragon* which is Chinese, this year we go East Indian, I play *Masala*....*Masala* now although it's East Indian, but then again you wouldn't see sari on the road and you would not see dhoti. You understand what I am saying? ... Because, some people might be looking for that, but *Masala* is a mixture of spices you know, and I always do, I always do research, every band that I play, I get books on it (shows book, see Figure 25).

Thus, a key component to winning is unfolding your theme through performance for the judges. Interestingly, because Martin is in the "bikini, beads, and feathers" market, participants mentioned that his continued effort to perform and to represent a theme is a rarity today.

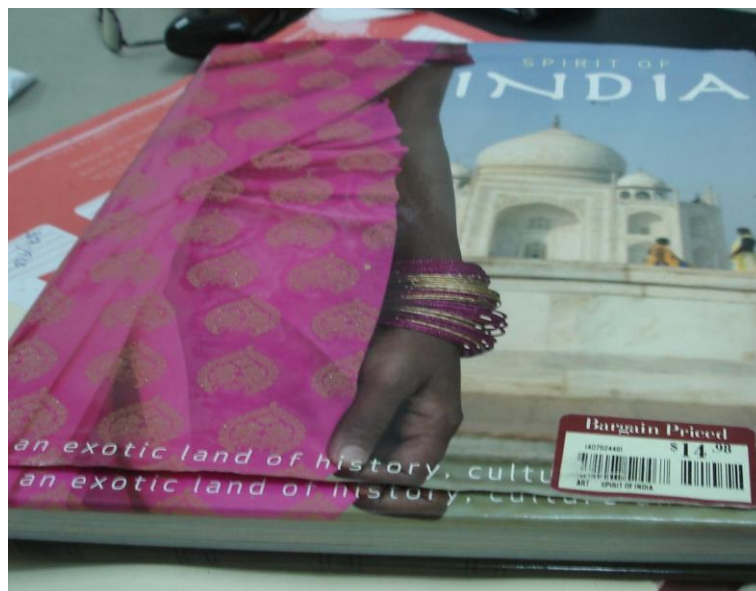


Figure 25: Martin's research book on Massala.

Lewis, whose band is not yet at Martin's level of theme performance, admits that that is one their goals; especially since his band aims to be one of those "bikini, beads, and feathers" bands that can win performances. He believes that if his band can incorporate this traditional performance component, not only will it increase his band's chances of winning, but it will also add value to the masquerade experience.

L: When I was touching on the point about not just being just a bikini [band], some people in the industry don't respect the bikini and beads. At the end of the day we are just part of the process, and this is the choice that we choose and there is a market for that, there's a market for people who like more coverage more cloth. So I don't understand why people knock it, all of us in the industry together and we present a show for the world to enjoy and people who choose, they can choose their different areas. But ... we have some more plans where we want to involve some more theatrics. I have said this before, we want to add more value to the masqueraders by taking a leaf out of ... say, Minshall's book and add some theatrics, so therefore you could mesh the two together. So that is something that you could actually look for from Rainbow.

However, for Lewis to take a page out of Minshall's book is to have masqueraders willing to execute a Minshall-style performance. For example, Susan explains that the entire costume is critical to the performance and recalls having to hold a "standard," while playing mas, which she explains as, "A tall thing [you have to hold] in your hand, so when you look at them down the road you see all these beautiful things in the air. Like a broomstick with a flag." In general, the older participants did not believe that the younger masqueraders would commit to the level of responsibility needed for such a performance. As Susan and Kevin explain,

S: No, they can't [carry a standard]. No, they don't want to do that, the beauty of it does not matter.

K: Peter Minshall play some mas the other day and everybody had to walk with their chair.

S: They had a chair in their hand, now Minshallites [followers of Minshall] do that, but you not getting the [younger generations to do so].

K: Now they had a part to do with the chairs and when they go on stage they have to play.

S: They play mas with a chair, now Minshallites will do that. Like Brian Mac Farlane people would wear all the robes and the drapes and all that, but the average person not doing that.

Aaron agrees with the notion that the masqueraders today do not really care about the theme: “Participants in Carnival just don’t care... ‘So what I’m playing African, I’m supposed to look like one?’ Gimme a break! You know, that’s the attitude, ‘I’m just here to have a good time’.”

Education and Carnival Past, Present, and Future

The impact of young people on Trinidad society was frequently discussed by participants, often when talking about the power of the younger generations over the direction of Carnival. This power was a concern for the older participants, as they felt the younger participants were not aware of and/or connected to the origins, festivities, and meanings behind Carnival traditions. Participants stressed the need for educating the youth to preserve what is left of Carnival traditions, and think that there are positive strides being made to teach young people about the Carnival heritage. Some delight in the fact that this education is not only academic, but also practical. For instance, many schools are teaching children how to play the steel pan, Trinidad’s national instrument and the most popular musical form at Carnival. In comparing this to what it was like when she was young, Halle thinks this is a positive change.

H: Like pan for example. I liked pan when I was growing up, but it was a thing, you know they used to say [for] whores at the time, but it was a thing only bad boys did. But now it is in schools. It was like taboo, it was not taught in those days, you know what I mean. It was not even a thought. But you [were] allowed to hear it, you could go listen to it, but your parents would not let you play it because it was taboo. But you did not even get to go listen as a kid when I was growing up because it was something that the bajons did. We used to call them “bajons” right, but now they call them gang boys or whatever they call them now. But in my time they were bajons, but those were the people who played the steel pans. So of course if you [were] well brought up, you can’t be seen with a steel pan in your hand, are you crazy? You know, but now it’s actually in schools, the best schools have their own steel bands, you know, so that’s like a huge step.

Halle feels that the social acceptance of the steel pan represents a progressive approach to preserving a part of the country’s heritage.

While some participants believed that teaching things like pan in schools is critical to the future of Carnival, others question the effectiveness of the textbook approach to teaching about Carnival tradition. For example, Father Charles questions the ability of the youth to synthesize the academic history of Carnival with its present day reality.

FC: And the question is if the young people don’t understand the tradition and we try to teach them the tradition, what are we really teaching them? Are we teaching them an academic, intellectual, understanding of the art? So that the celebration is divorced from the past. Because what we are teaching is not really the tradition, but an understanding of the tradition, so that they know what it used to be in the past. But Carnival is a different experience and they living that. So there is a divorce in their life and a kind of schizo kind of experience, or whatever really it is, because for young people today Carnival is not the thing, it’s hip hop, it’s dub [Jamaican music], it is the gangster music, that is what they going for.

Father Charles does not think the academic lessons about Carnival will resonate among a population of young people that he believes is more interested in non-traditional music genres that promote the gangster lifestyle.

Despite concerns, participants explained that many schools provide the opportunity for kids to play mas and experience Carnival. Moreover, the popular opinion is that the children's Carnival is more representative of the traditional style of Carnival than the pretty mas of the adults.

FC: Well the children, many people are saying that the children's Carnival is better than the adult Carnival even though you see some children wining down [Trinidad style dancing]. But um, the children Carnival seems to have more themes, less bikinis, more message type mas, more designers, because school teachers work on it and do their research. And they not out for the money, they out for trying to get the children into it, they out to produce a story and to explain as a teaching tool, it's a celebration tool. The [Catholic] boy[s] school here brings out an annual band and I think some girls, they organize the band and some girls join. It have about seven or eight buses of children going down to Port of Spain.

The children not only get to don costumes and participate at school, but they are also entered into the "kiddies" parade of bands on Carnival Saturday, held in the capital city.

According to Father Charles, some Catholic priests organize masquerade bands for their parishioners as a way for them to participate in the cultural traditions of the country. However, he points out that it is not necessarily representative of Catholic traditions.

FC: Yes, there are some Catholic Priests who engage their parishioners, whether it is in small intra thing, you know, they have a little calypso competition within the Parish or some kind of old mas competition or something so. So in an attempt to keep the culture within a certain controlled environment, it allows for people [to

have fun] so that the Catholic Church does not have a direct involvement in the mas, in the Carnival, as a Church, as an institution.

The influence of parents also plays a major role in the education of young people.

For example, religious beliefs are popular reasons for not participating in Carnival.

Those who either grew up in or are currently members of fundamentalist churches find that Carnival conflicts with their religious beliefs. As a result, there is little interest in teaching their children to preserve the Carnival heritage. Brian and Claire explain,

C: Our daughter for instance, we have a four year old, right, and she goes to preschool. They teaching them everything there. So when it's Christmas, she knows it's Christmas. Yesterday she came home and she said, "Mummy, I jump up" and I was like, "Huh (gasps for air), what?"

B: They had a jump up [act of masquerading] in school, they practicing.

C: They have mas in school, they doing fairyland with some kind of journey to Neverland whatever, and they are so innocent. If they could stay innocent like that, it's fine, but then it doesn't, because then we all grow up and it change to something else. All she's seeing really, when I look at it, all the child is seeing is a costume and they put it on, and "I get to jump up," and "I get to jump up with friends," and that's all she sees, you know. And we can't do anything about that, she's going to learn about it, she's going to be there, the public, you just have to tell her, you know the drinking is not good but, then you know, the this and the that, [the excess] exactly that's the part that's not good. She said so many times "Why we don't we do Carnival?" she asking me, "But I am doing it." And I tell her "No baby, we don't do it because we don't see it right to do it," [then the daughter says] "But, but Kasen jumps up" and that's her best friend, and she goes on but she can't understand, you know the innocence. You know, but I am not coming down on anybody. I am not going to do that. It's up to you and this one and that one, to know, you must know when something is right and you must know when something is wrong, you must know when it is time to stop, you know.

Obviously Trinidadian children are going to be exposed to teachings on Carnival just by attending public schools. This means that parents like Brian and Claire must decide

whether to separate their child from school events or counter-educate her about the “darker side” of Carnival. Aaron expands on this social dilemma,

A: Some schools try to teach the children the history of mas, but a lot of the children don't know the history, don't even know why they are putting on the costume. I remember in my situation, my children playing mas, and it is more or less what we wanted to play, we did not ask them what they wanted to play, we dress them up and put them on a stage and they were happy to jump across the stage and have fun. But I don't think that it was a question of we sit down, show them videos of old mas, and say, “This is a culture, would you like to play that and what would [you] be comfortable with?” I don't think parents take the time to do that. You might when you sitting down an evening talk about olden times and tell that's what used to happen and that sort of thing, and that might be the only way we would communicate that sort of thing. But there isn't a formal way of setting them, and I think that is a problem in Trinidad and it applies to mas, but also to calypso, it applies to the pan. Where people, children, youths, jumping to it without first understanding where it came from, what is its history and sometimes that makes for mistakes to be made. Even with the composing of a calypso, because you don't understand what is calypso in the first place, they may be singing some other genre of music and calling it calypso, and that is commonplace today. If you stop the average child, going across the stage and ask, “What is your costume representing?” most of them can't answer. And they will dress them up in Tibetan robes and all this sort of thing, and you know, the parents do all this fancy thing and research, but I am not sure it is communicated to the child, so the child can adequately answer, “I am representing this or that or the other.”

Education also comes from exhibitions of traditional Carnival characters. As the participants point out, opportunities for learning about the traditional characters occur every year. As Aaron explains,

A: There are still a lot of traditional characters being portrayed and the people who know how it is supposed to be depicted, do it. The people who playing North American Indians can talk the Indian language and communicate, some of it really what we call the Amerindian type of Indian which is the indigenous Caribs and Arawaks and they know the language and they will speak it when they [perform]. Even if you take, for example, like the Pierrot Grenade, there was certain things he had to do and the way he had to speak, they make a study of it

and on Carnival day they can expound that language. The Midnight Robber for example, and the fancy language that he would speak, there are people who take time to learn, and study what the former guys did, and learn their very speeches. There are some speeches in Trinidad which have been handed down by former robbers. I mean when I was a kid, I used to love to walk behind a robber and just hear him talk, and I picked up some myself and could still talk about some of the things that they would say. And there are the ones who would come up with new things today. So that kind of a passion one has to have if you are going to follow in the tradition.

While two of the participants shared their experiences with attending the more traditional Carnival displays, on the whole these events are poorly attended. Olivia, a foreign masquerader described her experiences,

O: Last night I got to see some of the traditional parts of Trini Carnival, the Midnight Robber. They had a parade of floats. And that was beautiful and we got to see more of the traditional stuff yesterday evening, so that [was] interesting.

Halle shared a similar experience:

H: Last week Thursday, in the evening [I attended] (the showing of traditional characters the week before Carnival). It was not well attended, but where they crack the whip [Jab Jab] and Dame Lorraine, you know, the big breast and big bottom, all that stuff. So it is being kept alive minimally, so this kind of helps.

Oftentimes young people will attend the traditional events because their parents do, highlighting the critical role of parents in maintaining awareness of the traditions.

The younger participants believe that education to keep tradition alive needs to happen in more creative ways. Generally, young people have little interest in the traditional forms of mas because the Carnivals they have witnessed are more about

having fun than about social significance and historical meanings. Evette describes the appeal of “sexy mas” over traditional mas.

E: Some people are trying, but because they, they not [doing] sexy mas and they not probably approaching it properly, then it, they end up in the medium or the small band category. You will get like medium band category or even a large band if they join up with a pan side and they play Fancy Sailor, they might get off with it, because everybody does associate the pan with powder [talc powder as part of the costume] and the Sailor with powder, you know most of the times when you see those pan sides and them, you will see like Fancy Sailors following them and they doing they Fancy Sailor dance. But, um, youth now, they more into wining and gyration and feeling the vibe of the music than they feeling than, because fancy sailor mas have a certain step, a certain groove, you know you have to be in a certain groove and understand the music, and they have a certain way of dancing, and it’s more like a skip than anything else.

Embedded in Evette’s excerpt is an explanation of the politics of band success at Carnival. If a band hopes to be in the large band category *and* wear traditional costumes, then it must also appeal to the younger generations, because they are the majority of today’s masqueraders.

Evette thinks that the mas bands who try to preserve the traditions with traditional style costumes need to be more creative. She cites a good example of a band that she thinks has it figured out because they create costumes that appeal to young people,

E: The Matrix, that’s the name of their band. Now remember everybody, it hit the youths with this show called the Matrix and all of this thing, so they portray the characters, they have a costume name Trini and she’s all dressed up like this, and they have different things like Zion, so they have this white costume and stuff. They using the ideas what the youths are feeding on, they [are] using that to portray their costumes and that’s where they will draw their youths. But if they go back and they say “Ok, we playing fancy sailors” not because it’s a cover up costume, but if you really know the origin of fancy sailors and the origin of this, and the origin of that, and you make [it] interesting to the youth, then you would draw them, you would draw them.

It is evident that themes that are tied to young people's interests are more likely to get their attention. But bands must also use marketing to capture their attention. Lewis explains that his band, Rainbow, has taken a critical step in sharing the band experience with young people, in that they have created a "behind the scenes documentary" of the band's journey while preparing for Carnival.

L: We have a Rainbow reality TV show. The reason that we started that is because we wanted to give people the behind the scenes because a lot of people can't afford to play mas and this is part of the education in terms of what it takes to put a band together. So [it plays] every Thursday around 8pm on CNMG (Caribbean New Media Group). We have about thirteen episodes. We showed people from the process, from the time we went to buy materials, behind the scenes of doing the model search, practicing for the rehearsals, and a lot of the laws involved in the process.

Using the medium of television, Lewis' band is not only able to get the attention of young people, but is doing so by speaking their language.

In summary, participants' experiences and perspectives reveal the importance of Carnival for Trinidadian society. From the release provided by the festivities, to the lack of crime during the events, Carnival is critical to the emotional health of the Trinidadian people and provides a degree of social balance, even without a formal "Stage." As Carnival continues to be transformed, participants believe that it becomes even more important to teach the younger generations about the past. These generations are influencing the future direction of Carnival, but are also much removed from the traditions of Carnival celebrations such as masquerade performance and competition. The youth, now spearheading the progress of Carnival, can come to respect the idea of a winning performance if they are educated about the value of tradition and heritage.

Considering the tensions revealed between the old and the new and the young and the old, in the next chapter, I examine the broader issues at work in participants' lived experiences of Carnival and theorize about what these issues mean for masquerade in a global context.

CHAPTER VIII

THEORIZING AND FURTHER DISCUSSION

Interpreting the experiences of the thirty-four participants helps to explain the way in which Carnival is celebrated today, and the various factors that contribute to executing this multifaceted phenomenon. Synthesizing the experiences of the participants sheds light on how Carnival has evolved, yet remains integral to life and culture in Trinidad. The interpretation of the experience of Carnival reveals the meanings that are important to understanding Carnival. To explore these meanings, we must examine the participants' experiences within the milieu of present-day society and culture, and concomitantly, develop a framework in which to define Carnival as a global experience.

Established through the emergent themes, this chapter further explores the essence of the participants' experiences. As a more conceptual level of interpretation, the intent of this chapter is to examine cultural expression as knowledge-making, and to situate Carnival participation as critical to this process. To accomplish this, the chapter is divided into two sections based on two key issues: (a) that of Trinidad Carnival as a global product, and (b) that of Carnival participation as an epistemology of lived experience. This chapter provides an opportunity for theorizing and discussion that connects the experiences of each Carnival participant to the broader issues discussed within the literature review and methodology chapters.

Trinidad Carnival as a global product is examined in the first section of this chapter. I begin with a discussion of the global factors that impact Trinidad Carnival, an evolving cultural product, as revealed through the experiences of the thirty-four participants. These factors include the historical and social meanings relative to Carnival tradition, the cultural beliefs and values associated with the way Carnival festivities are expressed, and the implications of such ideologies for perceptions of present-day Trinidad Carnival. This discussion fosters further questions about the role of masqueraders within the Carnival experience, and how dress serves as both a foundation for the participants' experiences and a framework for interpreting these experiences.

In the second part of this chapter, I discuss the younger generation as a voice that shapes the present-day Carnival culture. Using Rook's (1985) ritualistic consumption dimensions, I discuss the younger generations' ritualistic participation in Carnival. Specifically, I examine how this generation uses ritualistic dress practices to prepare for the larger ritual of Carnival. By relating the pretty mas costume, the most visible form of dress at Carnival, to the concepts paramount to the construction of knowledge based on lived experience, I explore how expression through dress plays a key role with respect to how this generation defines "Carnival." I conclude by theorizing about dress as the foundation for an embodied knowledge production process.

Trinidad Carnival as a Global Product

Concentrated efforts to market Trinidad Carnival globally have resulted in the celebration being commodified into a "global product." The most visible indicator of the commercial and global appeal of Trinidad Carnival is the pretty mas costume. Over the

past two decades, most pretty mas costumes at Trinidad Carnival have come to resemble a “Las Vegas showgirl” style costume. Concerns over the authenticity of this costume form, and about the risk of a total separation from tradition, are the key tensions played out in this costume. Green and Scher (2007) contend that Trinidad Carnival is a “historical product” (p. 1), yet at the same time has global appeal. Thus, viewing Trinidad Carnival as a global, yet historical product helps to shed light on why it has become difficult for cultural authorities to define Trinidad Carnival.

Participants explain that Carnival is changing because society has changed. They explained that what was customary in the past is completely different for the younger generation. Martin uses changes in methods of communication as an example of changing times. He notes,

M: In my time growing up, I get a cell phone when I was thirty years. I mean if you have a child now and they reach eight, nine years and you ain't give them a cell phone, they not up in the mix. You know, I can sit here and go on my computer and make a phone call and I see the person I speaking to through Skype. Back in the day what used to be a television was a letter coming from maybe yuh auntie, and all yuh sisters and yuh brothers and them come to sit round the table with yuh grandmother fuh she to read that letter to find out, only if yuh name mention in that letter, only to go in the yard and jump up and say “Oh gawd, meh auntie call meh name in the letter”... [and] when yuh see a plane you want to know if auntie coming. These are the things that used to happen back then. You could see a child doing that now? No, yuh grandmother will get up 5 o'clock in the morning and she will get dressed to go in the market and she call all the neighb[or] and she balancing she basket on her head without holding it and by 6 o'clock in the evening she now coming back home. [Now] yuh child would say, “Dad throw the keys for the Lexus for meh, ah gonna run it down the road to the supermarket to buy something.”

Martin compares his childhood experiences to that of his children, who are part of the younger generation, and illustrates how global technological advancements have replaced traditional practices.

Understanding the meanings associated with the way Trinidad Carnival is celebrated has become challenging because of a generational divide, with the older generations seeking to preserve traditions and the younger generations focusing on experiencing Carnival dressed in an aesthetic with a more global appeal. Changes in Trinidad Carnival paralleled the country's gradual shift to a global economy. Industrialization and globalization began to impact the way Carnival is produced. Costumers' access to global styles, diverse materials, and inexpensive labor has inevitably led to the development of a "Carnival business" mentality. Trinidadians' ability to travel and experience global cultures has resulted in a shift in what they perceive to be fashionable. Thus, the younger generations follow modern day trends and demand these styles for their costumes. Martin explains the resulting tension between the older and younger generations that surfaces in mas today:

M: So um, some people criticize what they had then, which was good, and some people will criticize what we have now thinking what we had then should be now. No! I am not seeing it like that. Now you have the younger generation dictate the pace, because uh, you will get old and you will, you will die or you will die young or whatever. So things changes and time changes and everything, everything change, you know. So what we seeing now, you understand what I am saying, we have to make the best of it because that's what we have you know. Um, yes I like to see what Minshall does, when I finish [play mas] and I go home, I rush to the television to see that theater thing, because I love that, but if I were to make that and put it out, it may not sell, you understand what I am saying?

Trinidadian diasporas have resulted in hybrid Carnivals being organized all over the world, and have become a means of sharing the Trinidad Carnival experience globally. However, such Carnivals have developed within the context of these foreign cultures, and thus, while hybrid Carnivals have been useful in marketing Trinidad Carnival, some think that they may misrepresent authentic Trinidad Carnival practices. For example, Kate explains that Caribana, celebrated in Toronto, is not a good representation of Trinidad Carnival:

K: There's Caribana. It's a little different, it's less skimpy, it's more traditional, there are older people doing the mas up there and I think they are just trying to keep it alive. And because it is not our culture, or it's not Trinidad or whatever, hardly any new people are coming in, you know, 'cause I guess they made it into a Caribbean thing, but so far what I have seen it is more traditional.

Kate believes that Caribana is not reflective of what Carnival is in Trinidad and is not evolving to include present day trends. Thus, to what extent have the hybrids impacted how Carnival is celebrated in Trinidad and perceived in these global markets?

The Impact of Hybrid Carnivals

The emigration of Trinidadian nationals to countries such as the US, England and Canada represents a turning point for traditional Carnival. Many emigrated to further their education and seek better career opportunities, starting in the mid 1960s and continuing with the growing relationship between Trinidad and the US after the 1972 Trinidad Oil Boom. Moreover, the European influence on Trinidad established the desire among Trinidadians for the foreign over the local early in the country's history (Scher, 2003). Despite availability of jobs from a prospering oil economy, the "brain drain" to

the US and UK continued. As these intellectuals and professionals became part of their new countries and communities, an increasingly distinctive Caribbean presence led to the establishment of hybrid Carnivals.

The development of hybrid Carnivals came from both ends of the social spectrum. In some cases it was a deliberate effort by the country's government, and in others it was a trickle-up movement, arising from the diasporas. Schechner (2004) explains, "Carnival is financially, artistically, and conceptually supported from the bottom up and from the top down. These two systems – 'top down' and 'bottom-up' – must be studied independently and in relation to each other (p. 4)." For example, Phillip (2007) explains that in Toronto, it was actually the government that sought out prominent Trinidadian scholars to help organize a cultural parade for the Blacks in the community who were already celebrating emancipation in their own way. Thus, while Caribana (a combination of Caribbean and bacchanal) was spearheaded by Trinidadians and based on Trinidad Carnival, it was to be a multicultural celebration for Toronto's diverse Black population. In contrast, a trickle-up example is New York's Labor Day festival. The development of the Labor Day parade was the result of Brooklyn's West Indians who were interested in keeping their culture alive while settling into their newly adopted societies. With the approval from authorities, they were able to expand their small-scale Caribbean parties into a more unified street parade.

The continued success and popularity of these hybrid Carnivals meant the spread of Trinidad Carnival, but in a form limited by their new social contexts. Participants, aware of these hybrid Carnivals, thought them to be lacking in quality when compared to

Trinidad Carnival. They believe that there is little comparison, supporting criticisms of scholars and Carnival authorities who see the hybrid as a dual-edge sword. While hybrids create awareness of Trinidad Carnival, they may not include what is “authentic” to Trinidad Carnival. Martin explains how London is not a true reflection of Trinidad style Carnival, “In London, they have the parade route and if you look on the side you will see different cultures, you have reggae music playing.” This is because hybrid Carnivals are typically not exclusive to the Trinidadian diaspora, meaning contributions from other black cultures are often included in the celebration, such as those from other Caribbean islands, as well as African Americans.

Despite the criticisms, the success of these hybrid Carnivals has resulted in transnationals becoming more involved in the “Carnival business,” and focusing on making a profit off Trinidad’s Carnival by attracting a more global crowd. As the older generations retired, younger professionals who are less connected to traditions and more global in mindset, have ultimately transformed Carnival for the tourist. Neil, a local participant, thinks that because of this business mindset, tourists do not get an “authentic” Carnival experience. Similarly, Kristy and Yanna, two foreign masqueraders, while satisfied with the level of service their band provided - including making them feel comfortable as tourists - were somewhat disappointed with the lack of focus on traditional events.

K: Not too many people doing the traditional art form. As a tourist I played with Thriller, they provided everything I would need for those two days. Therefore it’s very structured in those two days, unless you as the individual take the opportunity to say “Ok, I want to do these [traditional] kind of events.” Like the calypso, loved watching it on TV, but it was repeated. I even said to Andrew,

“That’s what I should have gone to!” If I do come back to Trinidad for Carnival, the things I go see would be a better mix, in my opinion.

Y: We did not even get to go to Panorama, which I heard is a big deal.

K: Yes, because we focused on the big fetes. All the ones that were very popular with limited tickets, we got into all of that. And I think that was more to do with, the majority law. On reflection, if I would do it again, I definitely would do Panorama. Definitely do that 12 hour calypso thing where that lady came and sang a song about Babylons in your brain, loved it! Because everything they were singing about were current. They sang about put down the guns you are making me sad, you know, the songs were really, really, good. And I thought that was really, really good. If Thriller can make like Panorama, or something to draw people into something like, they would have, probably more of the locals would be more favorable towards them. They won’t be seen as only bringing in the international crowd with all the money and everything that that entails. And you would have a more traditional view, working on the traditional structure that is already there, but I know they won’t do that because it is not cost effective and it’s not giving them lots of money, so it probably won’t happen.

The notion is that by marketing to tourists and foreigners, and, in turn, focusing on generating profits, bands are helping to marginalize the traditions of Carnival like Calypso and Panorama.

Hybrid Carnivals have shifted the focus to the inclusion of diverse cultures.

Likewise, because many are not locals, they focus on making everyone comfortable and turning Trinidad Carnival into a festival of global peoples. These shifts ultimately threaten the uniqueness of Trinidad Carnival. Therefore, efforts to gain control over the marketing of Carnival are being spearheaded by Trinidad’s government to protect Carnival’s traditions. But efforts by divergent groups have led to tensions and disagreements with regard to what “authentic” Trinidad Carnival means in the new millennium.

The Evolving Carnival Aesthetic

Meanings elicited through dress represent the socio-cultural mores, practices, and customs of a society (Eicher, Evenson, & Lutz, 2000). An investigation of dress form and meaning requires exploration in historical context, because what is deemed fashionable changes over time. A comparison between traditional and present day dress at Trinidad Carnival, and specifically the pretty mas costume, highlights the importance of dress as an index of social change not just for the celebration of Carnival but for Trinidad culture and society.

To fully understand present day pretty mas, however, it is necessary to acknowledge the cosmopolitan foundation of Trinidad culture. Considering that Trinidad Carnival was born out of European colonization and the transplantation of African slaves, could Trinidad culture be considered distinct? Solomon (2007) argues that the culture of a country can be compared to an individual's personality; a combination of things both abstract and concrete as, "the accumulation of shared meanings, rituals, norms and traditions among the members of an organization or society" (p. 542). McClung Lee et al (1969) explain that shifts in new cultural facts and practices are the result of either invention or the influence of foreign cultures, whether fostered within the group or learned from outsiders. Trinidadians were exposed to global cultures, tourists and foreigners brought their ideas to the country, and thus change in Carnival was inevitable. Changes in pretty mas costume were also propelled by a younger generation that is similarly influenced. For example, Helen explains how styles adopted by younger

masqueraders are shifting to resemble the style of the Brazilian “bikini, beads, and feathers.”

H: And I think the trend for costumed mas in Trinidad is going down the route of Brazilian Carnival, where certainly more detail is going into the women’s costume, but the ladies costumes are getting less and less in size and more and more skimpy. Um, and you seeing a few more of this Brazilian style bra tops where it is more of a wire frame with a nipple covering as opposed to a solid bikini like top. Um, and the bikini briefs and thongs are an option, that more girls, appropriate or not, are taking up.

Culture can be both a unifying and segregating force, allowing for appreciation and understanding by those of similar heritage and ambivalence or even confusion by those of divergent heritage (McClung Lee et al., 1969). Fashion change is experienced differently by different groups in society and thus may cause dissention when change results in a challenge to the traditional aesthetic. However, changes occur in a changed world, therefore new fashion holds meanings different to the past (Banner, 1983). This is the case with pretty mas, in that it is a reflection of general trends. Participants explained that the present day dress in general in Trinidad is significantly different than that of the past. That is, in the past, people were guided more by rules of modesty and covered their bodies out of respect for these rules. Some argue that the younger generation has little connection with standards of the past and thus place little importance on dressing modestly. As Aaron explains, “The way people dressed in the 1900s even just to come out of their house, is totally different to now and we have to accept that it is a changing world.”

Laver (1937) believes that fashion is discovery, and individuals use clothes to either exhibit or conceal their bodies. Participants believe that the younger generation appears concerned with showing off the body through the use of the “bikini, beads, and feathers” costume, or what some would consider exhibitionism. This supports Flugel’s (1930) theory of the Shifting Erogenous Zones, which states that clothes are used primarily to attract the opposite sex, by shifting the foci to conceal or reveal different areas of the body depending on the times. Increasing numbers of female masqueraders led to a social, and therefore style, change. In contrast to traditional times when women were not seen in Carnival, they are now empowered by the opportunity to display their bodies in the revealing bikini costumes (Riggio, 2004). Participants think that the masquerade costume reflects the desire to highlight erogenous zones while it communicates a disconnect with tradition, whether in terms of values, styles, or both.

The Authentic Voice

Not all changes to Trinidad Carnival have been well received locally, and defining what Carnival is has become an ongoing debate between the older and younger generations. Those involved in the official aspects of putting on Carnival, whether the government, businesses, or educational institutions, would like to see the country profit from this global, money making phenomenon. Interestingly, one of the most salient issues surrounding the debate is dress: the shift to a more global style, while profitable in its appeal, has threatened the disappearance of traditional costumes. The question is, should present day Carnival reflect the traditions out of which it was born, or should it transform with the times?

To craft a present day Carnival that resembles Carnival of traditional times requires a new social context. Since Carnival emerged from slavery, strife and oppression, and developed largely post-emancipation, an intense nationalist environment provided the impetus for the creation of male dominated and aggressive masquerade characters (Schechner, 2004). The strong sentiment against years of foreign occupation and class segregation was channeled into oratories practiced for a costumed appearance. Moreover, Traditional Carnival was tied to the existence of heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1965), or distinctive dualities between the rich and poor. However, after the oil boom of the 1970s, and the creation of a middle class, the extreme disparity between the rich and the poor began to diminish. An increase in spending power among a new class of people spurred the need to reign in an increasingly popular means of celebration. To define present day Carnival through the lens of tradition, therefore, has proven to be problematic for a festival that has become increasingly more global both at home and abroad. Green and Scher (2007) explain,

Mas takes many forms....New forms emerge and older ones remain or diminish in importance only to be resurrected. There is no 'right' or 'authentic' form. There is no 'best' form that everyone should adopt and to which everyone should conform, although there are surely struggles about such forms. There is no one configuration of forms and practices that can be said to 'best' represent who Trinidadians – of whatever sort – may wish to be considered as by various 'others' – tourists, international business, cultural critics. (p. 9)

Likewise, to restrict the form of costume to a particular definition of “tradition” would result in the loss of interest by the younger generations who are sustaining

Carnival and who have different ideas of art and beauty. John explains that it is the costume providers' obligation to give the consumers what they want.

J: Going back to the days of George Bailey, Irving McWilliams, Ken Morris [costume designers from 1950s]....you can go in a factory and create a product and put it on the shelf and hope that people will buy it. Now what is required is what the masquerader wants. If the customer wants creativity, but they want it with less cloth, it is the obligation of not just Rainbow but any band to provide that.....there are those bands that equally provide more in terms of covering and clothing and it is equally beautiful, so there is nothing wrong with it, but it satisfies that customer, because you have bikini and beads as they term it or you have a whole lot of clothes as some people will prefer it...it satisfies that customer.

Clearly, times have changed and beauty has been redefined. Those involved in the marketing of Carnival understand that the bikini style costume is a necessary tool to appeal to the global market.

On a national level, the desire to control Carnival has become increasingly important within a global market, and particularly considering the instant transmission of data. For years, Trinidad's intellectual property and cultural products have been marketed by transnationals and tourists alike, providing little ultimate benefit to the Trinidadian economy. Balliger (2007) explains that the government soon realized that while Trinidad's natural resources, such as oil, came with peaks and lows, Carnival, on the other hand, ostensibly will go on forever. Thus, controlling the media and outlets through which Carnival imagery is transmitted not only provides some profit through licensing agreements, but a level of control over the marketing of events. Aaron, who works for a government entertainment office, explains their efforts to internationalize Trinidad Carnival by helping to develop Carnival in foreign countries where groups are

interested in having their own Trinidad-style Carnival. His company has set up a database of local talents whose services can be marketed abroad.

A: At first people did not appreciate why we would want them to register with us, but they beginning to realize that, for example, when people have international Carnivals a first year, close to two to three hundred in the world, that they need help in even just designing the costumes, doing sketches, and then obviously the fabrication, it's a technique we had for time ago, that they could get help from people who could bend wire, who could beat copper, to mold plastics and these sort of different, um special techniques....When it comes to the music, pan is still a mystery to a lot of people in the world, so they need people who can teach them how to make the instrument, how to play the instrument how to tune the instrument. And so there's a lot of opportunity for people in Trinidad who have these skills throughout the world and the e-registry offers a readymade contact for these people.

In providing the services to plan, build, and promote a festival, his office is helping to gain control over how Carnival is defined, and support Trinidad's economy at the same time. This approach to globalizing the value of the Carnival product reflects the postmodern philosophy of capitalizing on the economic value of intellectual property (Green & Scher, 2007). Moreover, Trinidad Carnival's economic potential increases in value because it happens every year and requires participants to be highly engaged in the ritual preparation and consumption experience.

Ritualizing Carnival

As discussed in Chapter II, Carnival is a yearly ritual that encompasses many of the same elements of theater, including performers, costumed performances, and an audience. In the following sections, I explore what Carnival means for the younger generation using Rook's (1985) definition of "Ritual." He defines a ritual as,

[A] type of expressive, symbolic activity constructed of multiple behaviors that occur in a fixed, episodic sequence, and that tend to be repeated over time. Ritual behavior is dramatically scripted and acted out and is performed with formality, seriousness, and inner intensity. (p. 252)

I begin by examining the importance placed on dress as part of the ritualistic process of the Carnival experience. This examination then provides the basis for interpreting dress as a means of embodying the Carnival experience.

Ritualistic Consumption

In Carnavalesque environments, consumption rituals represent a celebration of immediate material gratification, identity extension and recreation, and the satisfaction of hedonic pleasures (Rook, 1987). Consumers mask, recreate, or reveal their identities through the procurement and adornment of costumes and other dress related items. They satisfy hedonic needs through the consumption of alcohol, exotic foods, souvenirs, and fetes, and once their inhibitions are released, they escape through debauchery and licentious acts. Levinson, Mack, Reinhardt, Suarez, and Yeh (1992) note "...examining cultural festivities as consumption phenomena can provide novel insights into consumer behavior, because such festivals often make manifest the more general values underlying consumption" (p. 219). The festive environment provides consumers with an outlet, a way to let go of inhibitions and partake in excessive and ritualistic consumption practices characteristic of the event.

The success of Trinidad Carnival comes from the ritualistic participation of masqueraders whose anticipation of participation helps to build up the event. Natasha supports this commitment to participation when she explained, "Honestly, the decision

was made after the first time I played mas that I would always play mas unless advised by a doctor that I can't. Nothing else influences me.” Yet this yearly ritual is not characteristic of one individual alone, but of the entire group, it is a large, pluralistic experience in preparation for the participation ritual that is Carnival (Rook, 1985). Participants expressed the need to participate in Carnival yearly, the desire to consume ritualistically to be a part of the festivities, and the need to be part of a masquerade group in order to be part of the ritual.

A ritual is human behavior scripted in a specific time period. The four components of rituals, as identified by Rook (1985), are: (1) ritual artifacts, (2) the ritual script, (3) ritual performance role(s), and (4) a ritual audience (p. 253). Each is useful for contextualizing Carnival participants' behavior. For example, at Carnival the ritual artifact is the costume, the ritual script is the time and day the participant has to put on the costume, and the place s/he has to be to be part of the band, the ritual performance is the masquerader acting out his new identity (program), which requires a ritual audience to provide the review for the program s/he has created (Stone, 1995).

The focal point of discussion for all participants was the importance of Rook's first component, the “ritual artifact.” The participants unanimously agreed that the demand was for the more global style of Carnival, or the “bikini, beads, and feathers,” costume. While there was appreciation for the traditions, there is little interest among this group in a body-concealing costume. As a result, many participants explained that exercising and dieting are important to the ritual preparation process required to prepare for playing mas. Instead of practicing oratories for hours to fully embody the character,

participants spend hours in the gym sculpting their bodies. Costume providers understood the importance that the younger generations place on being able to wear the “bikini, beads, and feathers” style that showcases their toned bodies. Michael, a costume provider who is disappointed with the direction that mas costumes have taken, explains the focus of most masqueraders today, and why the “bikini, beads, and feathers” costume has become the popular choice.

M: The whole body consciousness has taken over, everybody wants to go to the gym, everybody wants to look nice, show their body. And that’s what has happened, and the young people who now play Carnival, even some of the older people from my age, they have to join in and do the same because that’s all there is. I think it’s all the body consciousness and people are saying “It’s so hot!” And I say, “Has Trinidad gotten hotter? What is it? How come you did not feel hot when you wore the costumes fifteen years ago?” I think it is just the body consciousness that has created this thing and it has become more skimpy and everybody wants to show off their bodies.

As the costume has become the most important aspect of the Carnival ritual, procurement of it oftentimes involves global transactions. Costume providers rely on global sourcing for materials and even labor. But some masqueraders also admitted to shopping globally to complete their costume. For Natasha, this aspect of participating was the most stressful.

N: My boots, which I ordered online wasn’t here till Carnival Friday. I had a minor heart attack thinking I would not have my matching boots because the color could not be found in Trinidad. The boots complete the entire costume look and without [them] I would have not felt like a whole masquerader.

For Natasha, the boots were just as important as the rest of the costume. She had a set “program” regarding her appearance on Carnival day, and the boots, as ritual artifacts, were critical to it.

The “ritual script” is in part the schedule that Carnival participants adhere to in order to be part of the ritual group. All participants expressed anticipation over meeting the Carnival Monday and Tuesday deadlines, the two main masquerade days which represent the ritualistic experience. Costume providers stated that they needed to be flexible, organized and strategic to ensure that they met the masquerade deadline. Lewis explained that masqueraders are not aware of the challenges involved in meeting their demands, and are not interested in hearing any excuses regarding their costumes.

L: Sometimes the consumer, and this is about educating people as much as possible, I think people don’t...if you educate them a little bit, then they will understand a little bit more behind the scene what it takes to actually pull together [a band]. And sometimes people will say, “That is not my concern, I am paying 3500TT/583US you better give me what I [ordered],” and we try our best to make sure that that is delivered and our promise [is kept].

Most of the masqueraders talked about getting a costume they liked, or one for the band their loved ones were playing in, rather than cost. Thus, the participants budgeted for months to procure their costumes and complete the second of Rook’s ritual components – the script.

Rook’s (1985) third component, the ritual performance, is one that the different age groups disagree on. The older participants were nostalgic when they recounted the golden days of traditional Carnival. Their accounts were very similar. Key elements of the traditional performance were elaborate costumes embodying characters, props, and

months of oratory preparation. They also spoke of a high commitment to being part of an organized performance ritual on Carnival Monday and Tuesday. Aaron explains that his fondest childhood memories come from watching the performances of the traditional characters.

A: I mean when I was a kid, I used to love to walk behind a robber and just hear him talk, and I picked up some myself and could still talk about some of the things that they would say. And there are the ones who would come up with new things today. So that kind of a passion one has to have if you are going to follow in the tradition.

While these traditional performances still exist today, albeit on a small scale, the older participants did not think that young people are interested in performing in their costumes, and added that today's costume styles are so indistinguishable that they defeat the purpose of the traditional ritual performance.

Likewise, conversations with younger participants revealed little interest in performing in the traditional sense. Instead they spoke of dancing, and the opportunity to "free up" themselves at Carnival. Undoubtedly, meanings for the costumed appearance have evolved over generations. Green and Scher (2007) highlight the perception that "the national youth do not respect or understand the Carnival. Those who long for the Carnival of the old lament the cultural amnesia that afflicts Trinidadians and denigrates indigenous traditions" (p. 22). However, for the younger participants in this study, experiencing Carnival in this way is all they know, therefore there is nothing wrong with the ritual performance as they see it.

To complete the Carnival ritual there must be an audience. While younger participants did not plan performances or oratories as part of their masquerade, they did prepare to “look good” for the audience. Indeed, while collecting photographic data, I did not encounter a single masquerader who hesitated to pose for my camera, and thereby have months of ritual preparation recorded for posterity. Tetreault and Kline (1990) state that a “ritual provides a vehicle through which consumption behavior, with all its multisensory, hedonic, affective, cognitive, social, and cultural qualities are fully recognized” (p. 36). Thus, for the masqueraders, ritual preparation efforts, and particularly those related to dressing the body, must be recognized by others in order to be complete. Masqueraders took their dress very seriously, to the point where some, like Xavier, Paul, and Tony, chose not to wear the purchased costume in its entirety, but instead adorned themselves with paint to achieve their set program (Stone, 1967). As Stone posits, critical to any program is the review, so Helen’s acknowledgment of the trend towards using body paint provides an indication of how their efforts were reviewed:

H: Definitely a change in the decorative side of Carnival, I’ve notice in Trinidad a real emphasis on the body art. For example, um, spray painting, has really become very, very popular and um, we were laughing at a few guys who spray painted a six pack on their chest, which I could see coming, growing in popularity over the years.

The Costume and the Experience

The pretty mas costume has become the most visible cue for understanding what Carnival is about today. Dress at Carnival is therefore an avenue for interpreting the experience of Carnival, and thus the meanings of dress – whether corporeal, social or

cultural – are key to understanding Carnival as lived experience. For instance, interviews revealed the power of dress to help the masquerader “embody” Carnival. This was key for a generation that is very body conscious, and whose ritual script was built on an exercise and diet regimen assigned to maintain or to achieve the desired physical appearance. Participants explained that the costume, therefore, is as much a means to gain access to a mas band as to fully experience the ritual performance.

The masqueraders’ desire to be part of a homogeneous consumption community to enact the ritual script is also demonstrated through the costume. For example, Genelle explains how much it meant to her cousin to play mas with her band.

G: Being that my cousin also decided to play with the band and knowing that I usually don’t get to spend a lot of time with her, that heightened my excitement to play and made the preparation process go smoothly. Not only were we playing mas together but we were also able to catch up on lost time and we took the opportunity to prepare for Carnival together. This was definitely a plus.

Sharing the preparation ritual process, and sharing the ritual performance by being part of the same band, provided the opportunity for Genelle to strengthen her bond with her cousin and to share the experience of Carnival.

Participants sought to adorn themselves with a variety of ritual artifacts, including makeup and accessories, to achieve the perfect costumed appearance. They acknowledged the audience as the reason that they needed to look their best. Some of the men admitted to modifications for the purposes of eliciting certain responses from females. For example, Tony explained that he only body paints on Carnival Monday and goes without on Carnival Tuesday.

T: I had paint on yesterday, but today I chose not to paint because they see you in the paint and they in full costume and you know they do not really want you to touch them. Monday when a lot of people wear less costume, everyone, you feel freer to paint and stuff. Because it is more open, you not really inhibited to wear full costume on a Monday. So I mostly just wear my paint and thing on a Monday.

Tony's decision was based on the response he wanted from the females in the band, in that sometimes they are hesitant to dance with him for fear that his body paint will rub off on them. While other masqueraders who used body paint did not express that concern, the different approaches signify the importance that masqueraders place on the response of others to their appearance.

In regards to what costume communicates about culture and society at large, participants had differing views based on age. Older participants had strong opinions about what masquerade dress says about the meanings Carnival holds for the younger generations. While some saw it as an expression of the new generations and emblematic of a new, more wordly Carnival, others felt as if the younger generations have no pride. Some even felt that Carnival was being undermined by the negative implications of global influence. In contrast, younger masqueraders simply see dress at Carnival as a reflection of global fashion. They think mas costumes are beautiful and artistic. They express appreciation for the time required to make the costume and often referred to their costumes as "beautiful." None said they felt demoralized by wearing the costume and did not view the popular "bikini, beads, and feathers" as a degradation of Carnival, or Trinidad society for that matter. Instead, they see the costume as a representation of a new world order, where the younger generations have embraced the opportunity to

express what is important to them about Carnival. And ultimately, as this study has revealed, what is important to them is what is important to Carnival.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the broader issues that surfaced from the experiences of the thirty-four participants. I began with a discussion of why Trinidad Carnival is a global, historical product, and how these factors impact the way participants experienced Carnival. I then explored the ways that the younger generation helps to define how Carnival is celebrated today. Tenets of ritualistic participation were used to structure the key issues identified in the participants' narratives, and explore how fundamental masquerade dress is to synthesizing the diverse meanings inherent in the experience of present day Carnival. In the next chapter, I reflect on the process of research and interpretation. I discuss how this study contributes to the existing knowledge of Trinidad Carnival, and to our understanding of dress as critical to the Carnival experience. I conclude by providing suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER IX

IMPLICATIONS AND REFLECTION

The purpose of this study was to explore masquerade costume as central to Carnival as it is celebrated and experienced. This research filled a gap that exists in the literature by exploring dress as central to the experiences of a range of Carnival participants, and specifically by including the younger generations. The thirty-four participants reflect diverse demographics and types of involvement in Carnival. The participants' diverse perspectives provided the range necessary to fully understand Carnival as a phenomenon of lived experience. Participants, regardless of their role in Carnival, shared their perspectives on how societal changes in a global context have contributed to a shift in Carnival, and particularly in terms of the masquerade costume. In exploring Carnival costume as an index of socio-cultural change, it became clear that the younger generations have had a strong influence on how Carnival has evolved.

The term "masquerade costume" refers to the dress worn at Carnival. In present day Carnival it has taken on a more globally recognizable form, resembling the Las Vegas "show girl" costume comprised of bikini, beads, and feathers. As this dissertation demonstrates, mas costume is central to understanding Carnival because although its forms have changed, it has always been and continues to be at the core of the celebrations. The traditional masquerader, emerging from slavery and oppression, used the costume as a vehicle to rebel against the status quo. Along with rehearsed rhetoric,

the costumed appearance in olden times provided the voice for the character being mimicked – whether Pierrot Grenade, Midnight Robber, or Fancy Sailor. Modern day Carnival costumes have evolved away from the personification of a historically–relevant character, as individualistic expression has been replaced by a collective masquerade experience (i.e. mas band) with little differentiation in costume styles.

This study investigated the various factors that have contributed to the changes leading to modern day Carnival. Factors such as globalization and industrialization have resulted in a profit focused, business–based approach to Carnival. Preference for global trends and an overall lack of interest in traditional forms of performance among the younger generations contribute to the modern Carnival experience. In interpreting participants’ experiences, I sought to understand how modern Carnival is experienced by and through dress, and position Carnival as a conduit for knowledge-making for individuals and for Trinidad culture as a whole. I explored Carnival participation as a form of ritualistic consumption to further understand the central role of dress and appearance in Carnival. In this chapter, I reflect on the research process and outcomes, and discuss potential future directions suggested by the study.

This chapter is structured around three core areas: (1) *Communicating the Carnival Experience: Scope and Methods*, (2) *Organizing Experience: Articulating an Interpretation of Carnival*, and (3) *Masquerade Costume and Evolving Carnival Experience*. In the first area, research goals and objectives are revisited to discuss how they guided my selection of participants and my relationships with them. In the second part, I discuss the research process, including the implications of structuring and

articulating participants' experiences through thematic interpretation. In the third part of the chapter, I discuss the general contributions of the research and point to potential areas for further investigation.

Communicating the Carnival Experience: Scope and Methods

Interpretive methods were used to develop a framework to explore masquerade costume as a central means of communicating meanings at Trinidad Carnival. The longtime importance of Carnival to Trinidadians made it relatively easy to find individuals willing to participate. The general popularity of Carnival was conducive to finding participants with strong opinions about its place in culture and society. Participants were grouped by my approach to data collection. In depth interviews were conducted with those participants who were knowledgeable about Carnival and participate in it both for cultural and financial reasons. Some participants who were masqueraders were asked to journal about their Carnival preparation, providing a foundation for understanding how masqueraders plan for the event. On main Carnival days, impromptu interviews were conducted with Carnival participants selected randomly, and who, as a result of their transformed appearance and behavior, added dimension to the rest of the data. Interview questions stemmed from study objectives and were designed to provide an understanding of the scope of Carnival participation.

I began the interviews with a discussion of the participants' role in Carnival, as a basis for elaboration of their experiences. The participants were encouraged to share their opinions, likes, dislikes, and hopes for the future of Carnival. Considering the ongoing tensions centered around the masquerade costume, questions focused on

understanding what participants thought about mas costume form and meaning, past and present. Participants were asked to share their perspectives on how and why the styles have evolved, and what has motivated this evolution. Understanding that much of the tensions over the masquerade costume stem from differences in perspectives based on age, I anticipated that those who viewed me as part of the younger generation might be sensitive about sharing any negative views. If such instances arose, as the researcher, I sought to further establish a neutral stance and a desire to elicit diverse points of view. For example, in their interview, Brian and Claire said “You [are] interviewing us for pretty mas and we bashing it.” I responded by assuring them that because I was seeking a range of perspectives, their views, whether positive or negative, were extremely valuable to the research.

Having dual status as both an insider and outsider provided many benefits and challenges throughout the research process. I sought to build trust by assuring participants that while I am a Trinidad native, I have been living in the US and was therefore unaware of changes that may have occurred with regard to Carnival. My insider, or native status, made it easy for the participants to feel comfortable about sharing their views. It also made it easier for them to converse using colloquialisms, trusting that I understood what they were saying. Many participants of the older generations saw it as an opportunity to educate me about traditions and thought the research was also very useful for educating the younger generations overall. On the other hand, I was conscious of my need to be reflective. At times, I had to rephrase follow-up questions to ensure that they were not “leading” questions. In addition, I tried to appear

open and unbiased to elicit as comprehensive a response as possible. Finally, understanding how passionate most Trinidadians are in their feelings about Carnival, regardless of whether they are for or against it, I tried to ensure that interviews were scheduled at a location of the participant's choice, and at a time when the participant did not have schedule limitations, to allow the discussion to last as long as necessary.

Participants who were asked to keep a journal were given a list of prompts to use as a guide for organizing their thoughts. As most were from the younger generations, they were comfortable with using an online medium for communication. Thus, the journal directions and prompts were sent via email. Once the participant completed the journal he or she emailed it back to me. Electronic communication allowed me to ask for clarification about participants' answers and to get their responses within a short time frame. Widespread use of email and the internet by most of my participants also made it easy to engage in the participant confirmation process. To ensure that the interpretation was true to the participants' experiences, I used participant confirmation to solicit their feedback. Considering the large sample size, four participants were asked to provide feedback on the interpretation chapters. All participants confirmed that the interpretation was accurate. The multi-method research approach provided depth to the data collected, while a layered approach to interpretation helped to reveal the complexities of meaning inherent in Carnival.

Organizing Experience: Articulating an Interpretation of Carnival

Participants' experiences were as unique as their types of participation in Carnival, and their experiences with dress varied depending on their participation.

Despite this, many commonalities surfaced which were used to identify emergent themes. While commonalities were critical for structuring the interpretation, the differences helped identify tensions. In the analysis of the data, I first focused on the participants' experiences as a foundation for understanding what Carnival means today. Also, I sought to understand how these meanings are reflected in and embodied by masquerade costume.

The emergent themes were structured via four conceptual areas: *Cultural*, *Aesthetic*, *Economic*, and *Social*. Each area provided a part to the whole of the overall interpretation. In Chapter IV, *Embodying the Culture of Trinidad*, participants' love for culture and Trinidad were discussed. Participants all expressed pride in Trinidadian culture and explained that no other country offers a Carnival experience like Trinidad. Some participants illustrated their devotion to Trinidadian culture through a long history of involvement with cultural activities in general, and Carnival in particular. Although it was agreed that Carnival is about Trinidadian culture, there were differences among participants as to how it should be marketed. Marketing Carnival was an important topic of discussion for the participants who were involved in the business aspect of Carnival. They explained that Trinidad Carnival is a street festival of the people and has been able to avoid the rigid parade-style format of other Carnivals. While the festival style fosters solidarity between masqueraders and spectators, participants hoped that efforts to structure Trinidad's Carnival will help to market it globally as a cultural product. Brazil's Carnival was often cited as a comparison to Trinidad Carnival, primarily because

the former has been marketed specifically as a cultural product to the extent that it is recognized all over the world.

In Chapter V, *Aesthetics and the Carnival Experience*, participants' perspectives on the form and meanings of masquerade dress were explored. The preferred aesthetic of the present day costume, or "bikini, beads, and feathers," was a contentious issue among participants. To make a profit, costume providers produce the "bikini, beads, and feathers" style, despite their opinion of the aesthetic. Attitudes toward this costume form varied primarily based on the age of the participants or their psychographic characteristics, such as religious beliefs. The older generations did not feel connected to this body revealing form of costume, but understood that it was representative of the next generation. Participants of the younger generation explained that the modern form of costume was all they knew, and could only relate to more traditional styles through their parents' recollections of Carnivals of the past.

The impact of global fashion changes on the dress at Carnival was a heavily discussed topic. Many participants think that the younger generations are more influenced by foreign cultures, thus follow popular global trends. They explain that in doing so, the costume form continues to evolve further away from traditional styles. As a result, the focus on costuming for style means fewer masqueraders costume in the traditional way. Participants of both the older and younger generations agree that masqueraders now focus on displaying their bodies through the costume. As masqueraders engage in extensive fitness regimens during the months leading up to Carnival, it has become important that the costumes highlight such efforts. Because the

costume is now the price of admission into a mas band, and thus the right to participate as a masquerader, the costume issue is no small matter.

The economic potential of Carnival has attracted many entrepreneurs hoping to get in on the profits. The success of hybrid Carnivals in foreign markets has led to the general realization that Trinidad is not fully capitalizing on the global appeal of its Carnival. In addition, none of the profits from these hybrid Carnivals that essentially copy Trinidad's Carnival are making their way back to Trinidad. In Chapter VI, *The Economics of Experience*, implications of the money-making potential of Carnival in Trinidad and these copy-cat versions for business and the government were explored. In general, participants involved in the business aspects of Carnival spoke of the highly competitive environment of Carnival, and particularly for bands that are hoping to sell their "product" to the consumer.

As the primary product of Carnival, costume is central to its economic potential. The masqueraders are the target consumers and the costume the main marketing tool. Costumers explained that "bikini, beads, and feathers" costumes required considerable capital as they are expensive to make, and that the increasing number of bands in the costume business puts a strain on local resources. As a result, many admitted that outsourcing is the only cost-effective way to meet the consumer demand. Even if the materials are available, some costumers explained a desire to differentiate their product by using superior materials, which requires that they find these materials outside of Trinidad. A new business strategy, wherein 100% of the costume is outsourced, and referred to as a "costume in a box," was revealed to be a growing practice among

costumers, especially the newer ones looking to profit from Carnival. Participants were conflicted in their opinion as to what this level of outsourcing means for Trinidad's job economy and feared that it could lead to the disappearance of local talent.

The consensus among participants was that Carnival is a necessary good for Trinidad's economy and society. As described in Chapter VII, *Experiences in Social Context*, participants explained that Carnival is a highly anticipated time each year, and a time when people are allowed to come together and be free to express themselves. Carnival was even cited as the reason for the overall emotional health of Trinidad's people. Participants' high level of involvement in and preparation for Carnival is indicative of its overall degree of social importance.

Data revealed that the costume was more than simply masquerade dress at Carnival. Participants talked about the costume as a barometer of social change. When participants shared their opinions on changes in costumes styles, they oftentimes added that these changes were indicative of a changing social climate. Concerns over the disappearance of Carnival traditions were expressed by the older participants, who believed the performance aspect of Carnival was no longer about articulating socio-political grievances. Younger participants did not express an interest in learning oratories for their costumed appearance. Instead, for them masquerade means relieving stress by parading the streets while dancing and enjoying the overall experience. While it remains a steam valve of sorts, older generations believe this modern day approach to celebrating Carnival disregards the traditional purpose of costuming and is the result of a globalized

Trinidad society. All participants believe that efforts to educate Trinidad's youth must continue if the traditional ways of Carnival are to be preserved.

One area of importance for all participants was the absence of the Stage. Dismantled for the purposes of refurbishing, the Trinidad government has yet to replace it. Regardless of the difference in opinions between younger and older participants, both groups held the "Stage" in high regard and lamented over the fact that Carnival has been forced to go on without it. The Stage represented an important part of the masquerade performance. It was the main judging point and the moment where masqueraders were required to cross with their section to display the beauty of the costumes. Although it currently does not exist, the Stage remains a very important component of masquerade at Carnival and the hope that it will be rebuilt symbolizes a society's commitment to its roots.

By interpreting the themes that emerged from the data, I was able to understand the importance of costume for the experience of Carnival. The voices of the thirty-four participants provide a panoramic view of how dress can be seen as a basis for understanding the social, cultural, and economic importance of Carnival. In considering the global context of present day Carnival, I illustrated how external forces impacting Trinidadian society are displayed through its primary form of cultural expression. Although this study has made several important contributions to the overall understanding of Carnival, more research needs to be done. In light of my experiences, in the next section I provide suggestions for further research on the topic.

Masquerade Costume and the Evolving Carnival Experience

In this study I aimed to explore Carnival as lived experience and positioned masquerade dress as the key to understanding this experience. I found that Carnival is an integral part of Trinidadian society, one that tells the history of the Trinidadian people. The transformative nature of masquerade costume is the foundation of the Carnival experience in that it is what transports masqueraders into the festival.

Regardless of age, costume was central to all participants' experiences, as each focused on the creation, marketing, and/or wearing of the costume. Many highlighted the importance of the costume by engaging in an extensive preparation process that highlighted the importance of costume selection and finding the right accessories. For the younger participants, participating in Carnival means the ability to have fun and "free up," and their costume represents this freedom of expression, albeit to the dismay of some of the older participants.

I also explored the various facets of the Carnival business. It was important to understand the behind-the-scenes challenges of putting together a festival that appears effortless. Those involved in the Carnival business see the potential for economic profit to the extent that some focus on it year round. Participants in the business of Carnival expressed a love for culture and pride in seeing their product in finished form during Carnival. And, though all costumers put in many hours of labor and must handle the stresses associated with the Carnival business, at the time of the interviews, each was ready to begin preparations for the next year. This forethought and planning is essential

to achieve and maintain a successful business in what has become a highly competitive environment.

The global market has influenced the Carnival costume aesthetic as much as its business operations. Access to foreign markets and the Internet provide many options for costumers to consider when making production decisions. Thus, outsourcing both materials and production has become a popular approach to making costumes. Outsourcing, for some, is a practice that is more about making a profit and less about what is best for the country's job economy. However, the failure rate is high in the Carnival business, as globalization and ecommerce make it easier for consumers (masqueraders) to "shop around." As outsourcing becomes a popular approach to being successful in the masquerade business, more research is needed to explore in-depth the supply chain process and its impact on Trinidad's economy.

I also focused on understanding the evolution of masquerade costume. Factors that emerged include the demands of the younger masqueraders, access to global styles, body consciousness, and new perceptions of modesty in dress. The younger generations have always worn mas costumes that are body revealing, and therefore, do not see them as immodest. They are part of a generation that is intricately tied to global culture and are thus accustomed to rapid fashion changes. They are not necessarily committed to the preservation of traditional Carnival the way their older counterparts appear to be. For this reason, the older participants think educating the youth is paramount to ensure that they understand the importance of preserving the authenticity of Carnival. But authenticity, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. However, participants – whether

young or old – did share an interest in keeping Carnival alive. For both generations, Carnival has become a yearly ritual, and one that is necessary not just for the mental and emotional health of the country's people but for its socio-economic health. It is a type of ritualistic consumption shared among a group of people who understand the importance of the Carnival experience. As with many rituals, Carnival has become a social rite of passage for many Trinidadians, both young and old.

Although much has been uncovered that had not yet been addressed regarding Carnival, it is necessary to explore other research areas beyond the scope of this study. For example, some participants believe that the mas costume will follow cyclical fashion trends and ultimately return to the traditional styles. I believe that a longitudinal study is needed to observe the changes in the costume over a period of several years to gauge how change occurs and if change represents local or global influence. Because dress at Carnival has been primarily influenced by global trends, where must the impetus to return to traditional styles come from?

The use of body paint has been a recent development in dress seen at Trinidad Carnival, and is primarily used by men, though while in the field, I witnessed one or two female masqueraders who used body paint instead of a bikini top (which is a practice seen at Brazil Carnival). While most participants do not think mas costume will evolve to the level of nudity seen in Brazilian Carnival, there is definitely evidence of a small scale movement in that direction. While painting the body with mud and oil is done at J'ouvert, the use of colored paint to make a fashion statement is a new development that needs to be explored further.

In the past few years, more attention has been paid to men's costumes. Both costume providers and masqueraders alike assert that male masqueraders are not pleased with the costume package they get for their money. The complaint is that little effort is put into making the costumes look unique. Men feel that their costumes should offer more than just a pants and top, as they too desire to transform themselves under the cloak of masquerade costume during Carnival. Thus, males often will wear only half of their costume and then paint their bodies in a manner that uniquely reflects the theme of their band. Further research needs to be done to explore the needs of the male masquerader as consumer. Unlike men's participation in the past, when they costumed to make socio-political statements, these younger masqueraders make masquerade costume choices primarily for reasons of style.

Further exploration also needs to be done on the implications of hybrid Carnivals for perceptions of what constitutes authentic Trinidad Carnival. To explore this phenomenon, it would be interesting to interview foreigners who have never been to Trinidad Carnival, but have participated in the hybrid Carnivals. In addition, an understanding of what these consumers expect from the Trinidad Carnival experience would be helpful in regards to marketing Carnival. Along these same lines, it would be interesting to explore what motivates people to participate in Carnival in Trinidad and abroad.

Finally, because the absence of the Stage has become a popular topic of discussion, it is an area that could be explored further. For example, a study could examine how the Stage is a symbol of what makes for an "authentically Trinidadian"

Carnival experience. Such a study could help gauge the social importance of the Stage to the people, and shed light on why they believe that the Carnival experience is not the same without the Stage. Like the costume, the stage might also be a central component to understanding the Carnival experience and key to what makes Trinidad's Carnival unique.

In this dissertation, I have shown that masquerade costume is more than just “bikini, beads, and feathers;” it is an indicator of social values and attitudes toward dressing the body. Studying dress at Carnival provides an axis point for understanding the aesthetic, social, economic, and cultural dynamics of a country that has spearheaded the spread of Carnival worldwide. Currently, masquerade costume is about fashion, keeping up with global trends, and is a means to display the body. Although the evolution of costume has led to tension over what constitutes “authentic” Trinidad Carnival, the changes nevertheless reflect a society that is considerably different than what it was when its Carnival was born. Now a money-making endeavor, young masqueraders are the target market, as their money has become the bargaining tool behind the Carnival experience, and those focused on making a profit have altered the form of masquerade costume to suit their demands.

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APPENDIX A

IRB Consent Form

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT: Long Form

Project Title: Pretty Mas: The Voice of the New Generation

Project Director: Raedene P. Copeland

Participant's Name: _____

What is the study about?

The study explores consumer behavior in relation to dress at Carnival.

Why are you asking me?

I am asking you to participate because your participation in Carnival provides me with unique insight into the Carnival experience.

What will you ask me to do if I agree to be in the study?

I will require you to do in depth interviews and allow me to shadow you as you prepare and participate for the Carnival. I will also ask you to be available for a review of my interpretations of your transcript.

Is there any audio/video recording?

Audio and video recording will be used to ensure reliability of data collected and to capture the true essence of the lived experience of Carnival. Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the tape, your confidentiality for things you say on the tape cannot be guaranteed although the researcher will try to limit access to the tape as described below.

What are the dangers to me?

The Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro has determined that participation in this study poses no risk to participants.

If you have any concerns about your rights or how you are being treated please contact Eric Allen in the Office of Research and Compliance at UNCG at (336) 256-1482.

Questions about this project or your benefits or risks associated with being in this study can be answered by Dr. Nancy Nelson Hodges at (336) 256-0291 or njnelson@uncg.edu or Raedene Copeland who may be contacted at (919) 225-4534 or rpcopela@uncg.edu.

Are there any benefits to me for taking part in this research study?

There are no direct benefits to participants in this study.

Are there any benefits to society as a result of me taking part in this research?

Your participation will ensure that there is information available for people to understand your unique perspective and meanings associated with participating in Carnival.

Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?

There are no costs to you or payments made for participating in this study.

How will you keep my information confidential?

Information will be stored in a locked file cabinet, password protection, encryption, not identifying participants by name when data are disseminated, anonymous data collection procedures. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

What if I want to leave the study?

You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time, without penalty. If you do withdraw, it will not affect your in any way. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identifiable state.

What about new information/changes in the study?

If significant new information relating to the study becomes available which may relate to your willingness to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you.

Voluntary Consent by Participant:

By signing this consent form you are agreeing that you read, or it has been read to you, and you fully understand the contents of this document and are openly willing consent to take part in this study. All of your questions concerning this study have been answered. By signing this form, you are agreeing that you are 18 years of age or older and are agreeing to participate, or have the individual specified above as a participant participate, in this study described to you by Raedene Copeland.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX B

Interview Schedule: Group A

Criterion 1: Level of intensity

1. Describe your participation in Carnival this year.
2. What is your favorite Carnival event? Why?
3. Do you like your costume? Why or why not?
4. How often do you participate in Carnival?
5. At this moment what emotions are you feeling?

Criterion 2: Deviant Case

1. Describe what you like best about Carnival.
2. What best describes how you are feeling right now.
3. Are you with friends? How important is it to you that you have friends in your band? Is it easy to meet new people to parade with?
4. How would you describe your dancing?
5. How would you describe your costume?

Criterion 3: Opportunistic Case

1. What is your role in Carnival this year?
2. How long have you been with this band?
3. What is the theme of the band's costume offerings this year?
4. What do you like best about the costume?
5. Can you introduce to me to other members of your team?

APPENDIX C

Interview Schedule: Group B

1. Describe your involvement in Carnival in the past. How did you begin getting involved?
2. Describe your anticipated involvement in the upcoming Carnival.
3. What are some things you are doing to prepare?
4. How much time is spent in preparations?
5. How much money is spent in preparations?
6. What is your most favorite thing about Carnival?
7. Do you plan a budget to participate in the Carnival season? If so how much and what factors influence the dollar amount?
8. What is your least favorite thing about Carnival?
9. Do you participate in Carnival with friends or family?
10. How do you decide on a costume? Accessories?
11. Do you like your costume? Why or why not?
12. What are your impressions of Trinidad's Carnival compared to Carnivals globally?
13. Do you think Trinidad Carnival is globally known?
14. Do you act differently when 'playing mas' versus your everyday life? Why?
How? (Impulse as a probe)
15. How would you describe the pretty mas costume? Does it communicate anything about you? About Trinidad? About Carnival?

16. Is Carnival different today as compared to when you were young? If so, in what ways?
17. Is there anything significantly different about Carnival this year? If so, in what way?
18. Is there one word that sums up Carnival?
19. Do you plan to go back to work immediately after everything is over?
20. Describe what it is like to return to work after Carnival.
21. When will you start planning for next year?
22. Is there anything we did not talk about that you want to add?

APPENDIX D

Journal Prompts: Group C

INSTRUCTIONS: For the next 30 days record what you did as you prepare for/and participate in Carnival activities. Include in each entry your thoughts and feelings regarding the activity/experience.

PLEASE USE THE FOLLOWING PROMPTS TO GUIDE YOUR ENTRIES:

Masqueraders:

1. Describe your participation in Carnival this year.
2. When did you decide to play mas? Describe the decision making process and factors influencing your decision. For example, friends, budget, band popularity, costume offerings, etc.
3. How do you prepare for Carnival after you have purchased a costume? List and describe any other purchases you make to complete your costume for Carnival.
4. Explain the role of a budget as you plan for Carnival. Do you have one? What factors went into securing a reasonable budget to participate in Carnival?
5. Are you staying within budget? Describe your budget management, that is, your ability to stay within your budget, or challenges trying to stick to your budget.
6. Is your preparation process going smoothly? Describe any experience that enhanced or conflicted with your participation plans for Carnival. Describe how you felt and why this experience was meaningful.
7. Carnival is now over. How do you feel? How did this Carnival experience compare to the last Carnival you participated in?

8. Will you participate next year? Why or why not?